

BY THE AUTHOR
OF
MR. ADAM

Pat Frank

A N
A F F A I R
O F
S T A T E

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA AND NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT, 1948, BY PAT FRANK

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

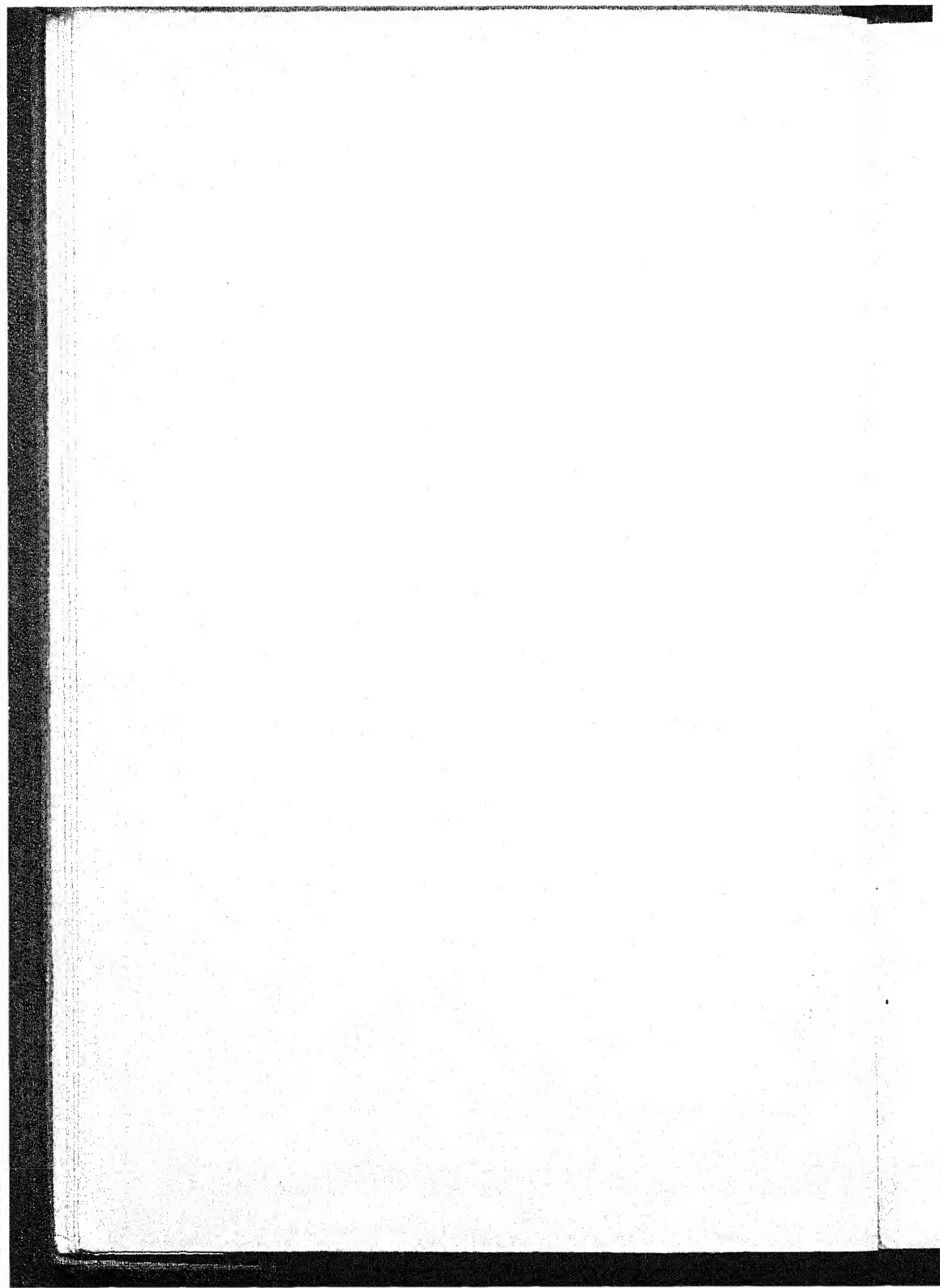
FIRST EDITION

For my wife, June

"I am tired and sick of war. Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell."—WILLIAM TECUMSEH SHERMAN.

AN AFFAIR OF STATE





CHAPTER ONE

1

THE WAY JEFF BAKER got his name was like this.

His father, a State Department clerk, was called to George Washington Hospital at the lunch hour. He remained at the hospital all the rest of the day, and all that night, in the late September of 1919. Mabel Baker was thirty-seven, this was their first child, and it was a difficult labor. Through the whole night Nicholas Baker kept his miserable watch on the bench in the corridor, his hands locked across his sharp knees, and his unsubstantial frame braced against the muffled cries that issued from the delivery room, and rolled down upon him in ever-quickenning rhythm like storm waves. Yet so unobtrusive was Nicholas Baker that when the baby was born neither the doctor nor the nurse remembered he was waiting. At eight in the morning he ventured into the hospital office and asked whether there was any news, and the startled telephone girl said the baby had been born an hour before, and it was a boy, and weighed five-and-a-half pounds, and where had Mr. Baker been all this time.

Mabel Baker was in a semi-private room, which was as much as they could afford. There were three other women in the room, and their unreserved inquisitiveness and rude staring made Nicholas Baker self-conscious as he took his wife's hand and bent to kiss her cheek. Her face was gray and showed all its lines. "Was it bad?" he whispered. "Was it bad, dear?"

"Not too bad," she said. "It's hard to remember. It was like a

nightmare you didn't think would ever end, and now it has ended."

"It's wonderful—a boy."

"He's very small, the doctor said."

"He'll grow bigger. He'll grow big enough for the Foreign Service."

"He'll grow up to be Ambassador to London," Mabel said, because that was the grandest thing she could imagine.

"Won't he have to make a million first?" Nicholas laughed. Mabel was positive, but had never convinced her husband, that only his lack of money prevented him from crossing the invisible line separating the career diplomats from the clerks, the gentlemen from the shabbily respectable, in the Department. He knew, although he never mentioned it, that there were barriers more inflexible than penury. There was family, and school, and the clothes he wore and the way he wore them, and the people he knew, and the wife he had married.

They talked of the things to be done—the telegram to her family, the announcement cards, the eight dollars a week to the colored maid to clean the house and cook breakfast and dinner while she was in the hospital, and finally a name for the boy. "We'll name him Nicholas, junior," Mabel said, "and we'll give him Rowley for a middle name. That'll please my dad."

"All right," Nicholas agreed. It was certainly the conventional, the expected name. He took his watch from his trousers pocket.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"Eight-forty."

"Then you'd better get down to the Department," she suggested, accurately reading his thought. Nicholas had not been late to work in fourteen years. It was something of a record in the European Division. It was his only distinction, and it would distress him to see it shattered.

"You're sure you'll be all right? I'll stay if you want me to."

"Of course I'm all right. Anyway, the doctor is coming to look at me again at ten, and then you can come back at noon."

A nurse, gauze mask swinging below her chin, entered the semi-

private room. "You want to see the baby, don't you, Mr. Baker?" she said.

"Oh, yes, of course I want to see the baby." He was surprised that he hadn't thought of this himself. One of the first things he should have done, he was sure, was to ask to see the baby. He hoped that Mabel hadn't noticed his lapse in protocol.

The baby was one of twelve babies, displayed like packaged dolls in a department store window, in a room shielded from the corridor by plate glass. "This is a new idea," the nurse explained. "Protects them from the flu germs." She pointed to one of the baskets. "That's yours."

Nicholas Baker saw a red face, wrinkled like a dried apple, but afterwards he was never absolutely certain he had looked at the right one. He wondered what custom required him to say, and how many minutes he should look at this wrinkled, red face. "Ah, fine, fine!" he said. After he was gone the nurse thought he behaved not at all like the father of a first-born son. It might have been his sixth, he seemed in such a hurry to get out of the hospital.

2

At the corner of Fourteenth and H Streets he detoured into a cigar store. "I want a box—no, twelve will be enough—twelve of your best cigars," he told the man behind the counter. "Coronas or Havanas or whatever is the best." He never smoked cigars himself so he wasn't sure of the brands.

"Fifty centers?"

"Well, I don't know. You've got good quarter ones, haven't you?"

"Sure."

"Well, quarter ones will do." It wasn't so much saving three dollars, Nicholas thought. It was simply that it would appear ostentatious for a man in his position to pass out fifty centers. Fifty centers were for Assistant Secretaries, and Chiefs of Division, and Consul Generals, and FSOs in Classes One and Two.

He ran up the steps of the State, War, and Navy Building at five

nightmare you didn't think would ever end, and now it has ended."

"It's wonderful—a boy."

"He's very small, the doctor said."

"He'll grow bigger. He'll grow big enough for the Foreign Service."

"He'll grow up to be Ambassador to London," Mabel said, because that was the grandest thing she could imagine.

"Won't he have to make a million first?" Nicholas laughed. Mabel was positive, but had never convinced her husband, that only his lack of money prevented him from crossing the invisible line separating the career diplomats from the clerks, the gentlemen from the shabbily respectable, in the Department. He knew, although he never mentioned it, that there were barriers more inflexible than penury. There was family, and school, and the clothes he wore and the way he wore them, and the people he knew, and the wife he had married.

They talked of the things to be done—the telegram to her family, the announcement cards, the eight dollars a week to the colored maid to clean the house and cook breakfast and dinner while she was in the hospital, and finally a name for the boy. "We'll name him Nicholas, junior," Mabel said, "and we'll give him Rowley for a middle name. That'll please my dad."

"All right," Nicholas agreed. It was certainly the conventional, the expected name. He took his watch from his trousers pocket.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"Eight-forty."

"Then you'd better get down to the Department," she suggested, accurately reading his thought. Nicholas had not been late to work in fourteen years. It was something of a record in the European Division. It was his only distinction, and it would distress him to see it shattered.

"You're sure you'll be all right? I'll stay if you want me to."

"Of course I'm all right. Anyway, the doctor is coming to look at me again at ten, and then you can come back at noon."

A nurse, gauze mask swinging below her chin, entered the semi-

private room. "You want to see the baby, don't you, Mr. Baker?" she said.

"Oh, yes, of course I want to see the baby." He was surprised that he hadn't thought of this himself. One of the first things he should have done, he was sure, was to ask to see the baby. He hoped that Mabel hadn't noticed his lapse in protocol.

The baby was one of twelve babies, displayed like packaged dolls in a department store window, in a room shielded from the corridor by plate glass. "This is a new idea," the nurse explained. "Protects them from the flu germs." She pointed to one of the baskets. "That's yours."

Nicholas Baker saw a red face, wrinkled like a dried apple, but afterwards he was never absolutely certain he had looked at the right one. He wondered what custom required him to say, and how many minutes he should look at this wrinkled, red face. "Ah, fine, fine!" he said. After he was gone the nurse thought he behaved not at all like the father of a first-born son. It might have been his sixth, he seemed in such a hurry to get out of the hospital.

2

At the corner of Fourteenth and H Streets he detoured into a cigar store. "I want a box—no, twelve will be enough—twelve of your best cigars," he told the man behind the counter. "Coronas or Havanas or whatever is the best." He never smoked cigars himself so he wasn't sure of the brands.

"Fifty centers?"

"Well, I don't know. You've got good quarter ones, haven't you?"

"Sure."

"Well, quarter ones will do." It wasn't so much saving three dollars, Nicholas thought. It was simply that it would appear ostentatious for a man in his position to pass out fifty centers. Fifty centers were for Assistant Secretaries, and Chiefs of Division, and Consul Generals, and FSOs in Classes One and Two.

He ran up the steps of the State, War, and Navy Building at five

to nine and when he reached his office on the third floor, West Executive Avenue side, he was gratified to find that as usual he was first. He went to the closet to change his coat and was astonished to see his blue serge on the hanger. If his blue serge was on the hanger then he must be wearing his alpaca office jacket. He looked down and saw that this was true. He had been wearing the black alpaca all along, since noon the day before. This was very disconcerting. He was glad he was alone in the office.

Miss Grimsby, the red-haired stenographer, came in a bit after nine, and the others in Eastern Mediterranean not long after that, and then at ten Horace Locke arrived.

Mr. Locke accepted a cigar and pumped his hand. "Nick," he said, "you did it. You produced a boy. I'm proud of you."

"Thanks, Mr. Locke." He was senior to Horace Locke by six years, both in age and in the Department, and had given him his elementary instruction in tariffs, visas, admiralty law, code and cipher, and protocol. He had charted for him the often devious channels through which international gossip and information flowed into and through the Department. On both Horace Locke's tours of duty in Washington they had been in the same office, and shared the same work. Within this room they were friends. As men of comparable mentality and similar feelings they discussed the Department's policies and the great issues of the day—the peace treaties, the League, the Army's Siberian adventure, the disastrous strike of steel workers just begun and the threatened strike of coal miners within the next few weeks, the disquieting international organization called the Comintern formed in Russia, John Alcock's non-stop flight across the Atlantic, the new Volstead Act, and the HCL. But Horace Locke was a Foreign Service Officer, and Nicholas Baker was a clerk, and so it was always "Mr. Locke," and "Nick."

"What're you going to name him? Nicholas of course. He's your first."

"Well, my wife wants me to call him Nicholas." It seemed silly, to carry on a conversation like this. He couldn't imagine Horace Locke caring whether the boy was named Nicholas or Julius Caesar.

Nicholas Baker was wondering whether it would be proper, and politic, to ask for the afternoon off when Mr. Locke took him by the arm and led him to his desk, so that the others in the room were excluded from what next he had to say.

"Nick," he asked, his long, handsome face suddenly sober, "did you hear the news?"

"No. What news?"

"The President had a stroke yesterday. In Wichita. Apoplexy."

"No!"

"Yes. It isn't generally known yet. I heard it from the Under-secretary last night at dinner."

"Do you think it's serious?"

"Apoplexy is always serious."

"I wasn't thinking of that, exactly. I was thinking of the League." Nicholas Baker had a theory, which he discreetly pushed when the moment was right, that the League would fail unless it was led by the United States, and there would be another war. He had another theory. It was too radical to voice openly. He believed that all the countries in the world should be formed into one government, as all the states were bound together in the United States.

"The League is finished, I'm afraid," said Mr. Locke.

"It's certainly finished unless the President is able to continue his speaking tour."

Mr. Locke shook his head. "It seems that our people are aroused and united only when they are immediately threatened. You take away their food, or their jobs, or put fear of sudden death into them—then they are aroused. But this League seems to them a faraway thing. It's like joining a lodge in another city. They don't see any quick benefit. They don't see how it can help them personally."

"But certainly they must think of their children."

"They don't think of their children. Only one generation in ten considers its children, and we had that generation in the last half of the Eighteenth Century. Anyway, Wilson's speaking tour will have to be cancelled. He can't possibly go on."

"It's a shame."

Mr. Locke sat down in his swivel chair and looked out of the wide window, over the White House, and over the Capitol beyond, so that the warm autumn sun was full on his face. "Poor Wilson," he said. "Poor, idealistic Wilson. What was it Jefferson said? It went something like this, 'The tree of Liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.'"

"It's always the patriots' blood. The tyrants never seem to bleed," Nicholas said.

"Well, that may be because most of us are patriots, really. So there are more of us to get hurt."

"Do you think so, honestly?"

"Yes, I do. The world is getting better. It must."

"Perhaps. We're due, and overdue."

3

Nicholas Baker spent his lunch hour at the hospital, and washed down a cheese sandwich with a glass of milk at the drug store on the way back to the Department. Mabel had assured him that she was perfectly happy, and so he did not ask for the afternoon off. Just before he left the office at six he drew up a chair to Mr. Locke's desk and announced: "Well, I've decided on a name, Mr. Locke. Do you know what I'm going to name him? I'm going to name him Jefferson Wilson Baker."

"That's a very ambitious name," said Horace Locke.

"For my son," said Nicholas Baker, "I'm a very ambitious man."

As he left the Department he was already considering where little Jefferson should go to school, and what he should be taught at home.

CHAPTER TWO

1

WHEN JEFF BAKER got out of the Army he knew it was time for him to try to become a Foreign Service Officer. The War Manpower Act was a godsend. It saved him a written examination. Two years as a line private, and three as a company grade officer, and then two more on occupation duty didn't fit a man for passing written examinations.

He mailed his application after he returned from Vienna, and while still on terminal leave, and then tried to forget about it.

He was offered jobs by a New York import house anxious to start a flow of Florentine and Austrian hand-tooled leather goods into the United States; by an ambitious tourist bureau impressed with his service record and wartime travels; and by a brigadier general on whose staff he had once served, and who was now public relations vice president for a group of distillers.

He could have stalled them, on the grounds that he had to settle his father's estate, but he turned them all down. Ever since he could remember, he'd wanted only one job.

Early in 1949 the Department sent him a letter regretting the delay in passing on his application. There were thousands ahead of him. In addition, he must realize that delays and bottlenecks had developed in conducting the necessary investigations. That was easy to understand. With things as they were, practically everybody was being investigated.

He went to Canada and Mexico because he had never been to

Canada and Mexico. His friend, Stud Beecham, said the war had given him a chronic case of itchy foot. But he just felt restless. When his savings ran out he returned to Washington.

2

There was pitifully little to do about the estate. His father had died while Jeff was in Italy, about the time of the campaign on the Garigliano. (He hardly remembered his mother at all, for she was gone when he was six.) Nicholas Baker left the house in Georgetown, encumbered with a mortgage, and some victory bonds, and two thousand in cash after all debts were paid, and the deed to five building lots in Florida, at a town called Welaka Springs. The building lots had been purchased in 1927, and Jeff surmised, from his father's correspondence over twelve years, that they would still be under water.

The carefully kept private ledgers made Jeff realize how little he really knew about his father. Nicholas Baker had always seemed a man untouched by personal worries, but always ready to brood about the Manchuria affair, or the Bulgarian cabinet, or the war in Spain, or almost any Central American revolution. Yet in these ledgers he found proof that his father endured many financial indignities. There were Morris Plan loans, and furniture loans, and automobile loans, and the two years to pay for the refrigerator, and the dunning letters from grocers and department stores and the doctors and the Medical Credit Association, and even the undertaker. Sometimes the letters concluded: "If this account is not settled at once it will be brought to the attention of your employers." Always after that, payment was quick. In 1926 there was a bequest of \$2500 from a cousin—that would account for the building lots in Florida. Once there was a notation—"Fifteenth wedding anniversary. Tickets to National Theater \$6.60." It was the only one of its kind.

There were three puzzling loans, each for \$500, from Horace Locke. This could only be the Horace Locke who for so many years had been a Chief of Division, and yet it seemed most unlikely that

his father would know this Horace Locke well enough to borrow from him. The loans had been made in the years 1931, '32, and '33, always in September. What had happened in those years? Weren't they the lean years of government economy, and the fifteen per cent cut in his father's salary? Yes, of course they were. He also recalled them as three of the four years he'd gone to Lawrenceville. The notes, like all the notes and bills in the ledgers, were acknowledged, "paid in full."

The house on Q Street, its bricks crumbling under the porch and its bedroom wallpaper peeling, seemed dreary and aloof as a summer cottage in January. It held him a stranger, and hostile. When Jeff found he could sell it for twice the mortgage, and he might never get such a price again, and that he could move in with Stud Beecham, he sold it. They had grown up together in Georgetown, he and Stud, together fought the tough kids from Foggy Bottom, and double-dated to their first dances. Now Stud was a Field Inspector for Interior. He had a three-room apartment in Riggs Court, off Dupont Circle. It was ample for both of them, so long as they kept each other informed of their plans, and exercised consideration and discretion when returning home after midnight.

3

The letter from the Department reached him there. His application had been approved. He shortly would be asked to report for the oral examination. "Well," said Stud, who was watching him, "you're in! I can tell by your face. You'll have to do something about that. Diplomats have poker faces."

"Not yet," Jeff said. "Not hardly. Four out of five flunk the oral. It's supposed to be like the Spanish Inquisition in a one-hour capsule."

"You won't flunk it. You teethed on the stuff."

"Then there's the physical, and the final security check."

"Physically," Stud estimated, "you'll be the finest specimen in State. They'll keep you in Washington, and use you once a year to

model striped trousers at the English garden party." He was okay physically, Jeff knew, so far as any Army medic could tell. Between the ages of eight and twelve his frame had sprouted out of his clothes every six months, to his father's astonishment and dismay, until in his junior year at Princeton he stretched to two and a half inches over six feet. His weight hadn't kept pace in school and college, but he had filled out in the Army so that now he was a fairly hard hundred and seventy pounds. But there was something about his physical condition—or maybe it was mental—that he never mentioned. It was a souvenir from September, 1944. It was very simple. Sudden, loud noises blacked out his mind and panicked his will and on occasion menaced his dignity as a human being.

"And as to security," Stud went on, "I guess you're secure enough. You don't know any Communists, do you?"

"Sure, I know some Communists," Jeff said, "but they're all Russians." He wasn't certain this was an accurate statement. He had met Russians in Bari and Trieste, and later in Vienna, but he wasn't sure all of them were Communists. Wasn't it said there were only three million in the party? And some of those he knew hadn't seemed particularly happy with the regime. "Stud," he said, "do you remember that girl at the Eaton party?"

"What girl? There were six or seven, or maybe ten or twelve. I don't remember so well."

"The one—you know, Susan something." He knew very well that her name was Susan Pickett, and she lived at the Bay State Apartments, 1701 Massachusetts, and her telephone number was Michigan 8218, and she worked in the office of the Secretary of State, and on the night of the Eaton party she'd come with Frederick Keller, who had some sort of a hush-hush job in the European Division. All this he'd managed to learn, although he'd been alone with her for only a minute or two.

"Oh, you mean Susie Pickett?" said Stud. "Is she a Commie? If she's a Commie I'll be a fellow traveler."

"That's the one." He realized, quite suddenly, that at least once each day since the Eaton party he'd thought of her. She'd said, "I

want you to call me," and it had seemed a definite invitation, and not cocktail courtesy. He wondered why he hadn't called before, and decided he had been a little afraid. Of what? Well, he wasn't handsome. He had a half-inch more of nose and chin than is usually allotted, and had always thought of himself as singularly gawky. This hadn't seemed to matter to the girls in Milan or Vienna, or Washington either since he'd been back. So he must have been afraid because she worked in the Secretary's office, and therefore was not common flesh, and approachable, until his application had been approved. He knew this was silly. It was a reflex from his boyhood, when he had been silently aware of the social barrier his father could never pass.

"Well, what about her?" Stud said. "If you're going to celebrate tonight, why experiment with new stuff?"

"She's pretty nice."

"Nice, hell, she's gorgeous. But how do you know she's not shackled with Fred Keller?"

"I don't think so," said Jeff, but at the same time he suspected this might be true. In a city where most of the women seemed as gray and sexless as sheets of mimeograph paper, it wasn't likely Susan Pickett would be unattached.

4

He called her apartment at six that evening, and she said of course she remembered him, and wondered why he'd asked for her telephone number if he didn't intend using it. He asked whether she'd like to go out that night, and told her of the letter from the Department. She said that was very exciting, and she would like to go out, and should she wear a long dress. He said not to bother, and he'd be around at eight.

The apartment was a Washington two-and-a-half, a bedroom, living room with alcove, and compact kitchen. She poked her head out of the bedroom, and said she'd be a minute, and he prowled around outside. It didn't look like a woman's apartment. There

were too many bookcases, and they were not lined with women's books. There were too many utilitarian ash trays. The bar in the alcove was solid masculine teak. There was a man's photograph on an end table. It was not Fred Keller, but a Marine Corps colonel in his forties, or older.

When she came out of the bedroom he wanted to put his hands on her, right then, and she instantly sensed this and seemed a bit amused and said, "Must be the perfume."

"It's something!" he said, alarmed that the girl could have such an immediate aphrodisiac effect on him. He thought, I've been too long without a woman, and then decided this couldn't be it, because he'd been longer, and he'd never felt quite like this before.

"It can't be the dress." She pivoted with a model's confident grace, and he saw that the dress was not daring, except for its color. Only a woman of her lustrous dark shading could wear such brilliant emerald. He guessed it was the way she moved, not deliberately sensuous, but with such constant, flowing vigor that you could not keep your eyes off her body.

"It could be the dress, or it could be the perfume, but it isn't. You know exactly what it is, and you ought to be ashamed."

"You're pretty direct, aren't you?" she said. "I'll be direct too. I'm hungry."

5

He took her to Hall's, down near the waterfront, and they ate lobster flown from Maine that morning. She knew how to eat lobster. She knew how to start at the tip of the tail, and draw all the meat from the shell in one skillful operation. She cracked the claws expertly, and neglected nothing, not even the succulent globules of flesh hidden under the base of the legs. "You must have eaten here before," he suggested.

"I ate here often until a few years ago. My husband used to bring me."

She would have been married, of course, but it didn't seem the proper time to ask about her husband. She would tell him of her

husband when she was ready. "Did you know this was General Grant's favorite restaurant?" he asked.

"No, I didn't know."

"It was. He had a private dining room on the second floor, and when he'd finished a couple of dozen chincoteagues and a three-pound lobster he'd pace up and down on the balcony over the garden, smoking a cigar and shaking down his dinner."

"Tell me," she said, watching the thin spiral of smoke from the clamshell ash tray, "what do you think of generals?"

"I think generals are fine for winning wars. Or used to be."

"Used to be?"

"Uh-huh. I think generals are archaic, like knights in armor."

"If you talk like that in the Department," she said, "you won't be very popular. Generals are Chiefs of Mission in all the critical areas, and more areas are getting critical all the time."

They talked of the successes and failures of ERP, the uranium mines in Bohemia, British trade, Italian Communists, Chinese graft, and the Japanese *Zaibatsu*. They leaped across the globe to The Straits, and she asked him what he thought of the new Turkish military loan. "It's ridiculous," he said. "There'll be big parties in the Casino Taxim, and toasts to that noble ally and splendid democracy, Turkey. Then the pashas will take the hundred million bucks and build more villas on the islands in the Marmara. The Turkish Army doesn't need equipment. It needs education. It would take one generation for the Turkish Army to learn to read, and another to learn how to use radar and jets and rockets."

"Jeff," she asked, "do you always say what you think, like that?" She asked this very quietly, and very seriously.

"Yes," he said, "I suppose I do."

"People don't like to hear that sort of talk. It isn't, you know, very diplomatic. Particularly in the Department it isn't diplomatic. There are men in the Department whose reputations suffer when any part of our policy is questioned—even such a small part as the Turkish loan. You could very well get your official throat cut, for a statement like that."

"Anyway, it's the truth."

"They'll ship you to Noumea, or Guayaquil, or Addis Ababa," she predicted, naming some of the traditional Siberias of the Foreign Service. "I don't want that to happen to you." She seemed genuinely troubled. "I want you to go to some place where you are needed."

"Like where?"

"Like Budapest. Or Prague. Or Rome."

He realized for the first time that she had been dropping carefully chosen pebbles into the stream of his thought, and charting the spreading ripples of his reaction. He thought it wise to parry question with question. "Susan," he asked, "exactly what do you do in the Secretary's office?"

"I'm just the stenographer who takes the nine o'clock conference. I'm rated as a confidential secretary, and I'm an FSS, Class Eight, and make fifty-four hundred, but all I actually do is take the nine o'clock conference."

"That's pretty important, isn't it? Isn't that the Planning Conference? Don't you hear a lot?"

"I hear a lot, and I never talk about it. But sometimes I think."

He wondered how a girl with such irregular features could appear so beautiful. She had none of the vacant, antiseptic loveliness that the back pages of magazines made Americans in the middle of the century accept as beauty. But the eyes of the men at other tables were drawn away from their own women, and towards her. "How is it," he inquired, "that you were free tonight? I'm very happy that you are, but it doesn't seem logical."

"In the first place, don't you realize that there are a hundred thousand more women than men in Washington?"

"And in the second place?"

"In the second place, I don't sleep around, and I'm not getting married."

"You're human, aren't you?"

She didn't reply at once. She tapped her cigarette into the clamshell, and then cocked her head to one side in a way she had, as if this was a difficult and almost an unfair question. "There are two

answers to that," she said finally. "The first is that I wish I could show you how human I am. The second is that I can't."

"That's no answer. That's a riddle."

"Wait. I'll unriddle it. I married when I was nineteen. My husband was much older. Not that he wasn't a good husband. He was. In every sense. He was also—I was going to say like a father but that's not what I mean. He was like a tutor—a wise friend. He was in the Public Health Service and when war came the Marines took him and shipped him out to the Pacific to clean up those islands. I'd see him every six months or so. He'd come back to get a plane-load of little fish to eat mosquito larvae—things like that. He was always fighting for supplies and medicines not only for the Marines but for the people in New Georgia, and the Marshallese, and the Gilbertese. He was that kind of man."

"And you lost him?"

"I lost him. I celebrated V-J day in a big way, because I knew he'd soon be back. I woke up with a hangover and a telegram beginning, 'The Secretary of the Navy regrets.' All I have to show for him is a Legion of Merit, posthumous."

"I'll admit that's tough. Okay. But other women lost their husbands and got over it."

"I know. I didn't. Other women don't have to take the State Department's nine o'clock conference."

"I don't understand."

"You don't? Put it this way. Lots of women won't have babies, nowadays, because they're afraid. They're afraid they'll lose them in another war. They're afraid babies will be killed in their cribs this year, or next year, or the year after. Right here, in Washington. In New York, and Pittsburgh, and Detroit and every other target city. Well, I don't want to have any more men, like other women don't want to have any more babies. I couldn't bear to lose another man."

Jeff Baker wondered whether it would be presumptuous for him to ask about Keller, and he decided it wouldn't be because she would understand it was necessary for him to know all he could know of her. "What about Fred Keller?" he said.

"I go out with him, very occasionally."

"That all?"

"That's all. He's a dear."

"You mean he doesn't make passes at you. That's what a woman means when she says a man's a dear."

"As a matter of fact, he doesn't. When he takes you out you feel that he's wearing you like a carnation in his buttonhole. He'd never do anything so crude as make a pass. Fred's a perfectionist. I don't know exactly how he'd go about having an affair with a girl, but I have a hunch the preliminaries would be sending orchids, and introducing you to his mother."

"He didn't look so damn safe to me," Jeff said. Keller was spare and tanned, still a bachelor at forty, and rich enough to have twelve acres in Berwyn, a shooting box on the Eastern Shore, and an ocean-front villa near Palm Beach. He had once been runner-up for the national squash title, and in 1947 had been picked as one of America's ten best-dressed men.

"Maybe you're right. Maybe he's not safe," said Susan Pickett, and Jeff knew she was not speaking of her relations with him, but of something else.

"Go on," he said.

"Nothing, except sometimes he gives me the shivers. He's so casual about war. When he talks about atomic bombs his mouth waters as if they were lemons."

"That's not unusual in these times. And after all, he's not so important. He's not Undersecretary of State, or Chief of a bureau or a division or even a section. He just has some sort of a control job on the European desk."

"He is important," she insisted. "He gets into everything. And he's going to Budapest."

Jeff recalled she had mentioned Budapest before. "Didn't you recommend Budapest for me?"

"I suppose so. It's been on my mind."

"What's cooking in Budapest?"

"Nothing that isn't cooking in Prague and Salonika and Trieste

and Vienna and Berlin and Seoul and everywhere else where we're face to face with the Russians. Only in Budapest it's closer to burning." She was silent while the waiter laid the check on the table. "Jeff," she added when the waiter was gone, "sometimes I forget I'm not supposed to think. I'm just the girl who takes the nine o'clock conference, and I need my job, and if I do too much thinking and talking I'll lose it."

"What're you afraid of—thought control police?"

"Sure. We all are."

"Okay," he agreed, "we won't talk shop any more. Anyway I like Budapest. It lives."

"You've been there?"

"When I was a kid. In the summer after my sophomore year in college. The Department sent my father to help in an audit of the Balkan Missions, and we made a trip up the Danube. What a city!"

"If you're interested in what's going to happen to this world," she said quietly, "you should try to go there again."

He knew it was not necessary to talk any more of it. She was a puzzling girl, a skein of fear grown over her emotions, masking her desires, but he did not doubt her judgment. If she thought Budapest would be an interesting and instructive post, then he'd believe her.

It was something to remember, but not to count on.

Outside, in a taxi, he suggested the Footlight Club, but she said that while it was a nice idea, and she loved to dance, it was too late for her to go anywhere else. She had to be in the office, typing the agenda for the nine o'clock conference, at eight every morning. Therefore she didn't stay out late except Saturday nights.

6

He took her to her apartment door. She said, "I'd ask you in, but it wouldn't do either of us any good."

"I guess not." Still, he didn't want to leave. She seemed very small, standing close to him there in the doorway. When she was

seated her straight shoulders and the way she held her head gave her an illusion of height, but when she stood up she really wasn't very tall.

"Well, goodbye," she said, her fingers poised to turn the key.

"Well, goodnight," he said, but he didn't go.

"You don't feel very platonic, do you?"

"Frankly, no."

"I'm not going to be coy, and tell you I never let a man make love to me the first time I'm out with him. I'm just going to say I'm sorry."

He cupped her shoulders in his hands. "Susan, this isn't the way I was hoping it would be. Look at me."

She kept her eyes on the key. "I didn't want it to be like this either. I wanted to go out with you and see if something wouldn't happen. It didn't."

"Suppose we *are* a pinch of ashes in the first day of World War number three? Why not have what we can now? I'm afraid I sound silly—like a kid quoting Omar."

"Oh, no, Jeff. You're not silly. You're perfectly logical."

"Well?"

She didn't attempt to move, or say anything more, until his fingers loosened. "I'm not afraid for myself," she said then. "If I thought the world would go up in one big bang I honestly wouldn't care much. I think I'd be sort of relieved. It's just that I'm afraid to have anyone else because I've got the damndest premonition I'd lose him."

"If you went to a psychiatrist," Jeff said, "which I think you ought to do, he'd tell you you were wrong."

"I'm sure of it. If I thought I could have a man without too many inner complications, well, we'd be in there, and not out here. Only I know I can't, Jeff. I've only had one man in my life. Well, not counting schoolgirl experiments. And if I had another I'd feel the same way towards him that I did towards my husband and then the war would come along and kill him."

"The trouble with you, Susan, is that you won't take a chance on the world."

"I don't see why I should take a chance when I know that the cards are stacked. Now go on home, Jeff. I'll stay as I am."

7

He walked up Massachusetts to Dupont Circle, feeling empty and frustrated and baffled. Stud was listening to the eleven o'clock news. "I see you didn't make the grade," Stud greeted him. "Not even lipstick. Is she tied up with Keller?"

"No, she's tied up with herself."

"There are two girls on the floor below," Stud said, "who have been running up here all evening to borrow ice cubes, glasses, bottle openers, and cigarettes. They work in Archives, and they're having a party for the Junior Archivists, Division of Useless Executive Papers. They want us to come down when the party is over."

"Not me," Jeff said.

"They're not bad," Stud said. "They develop a lot of compression, working down there three floors below the Archives Building. They claim all the men in Archives are unburied cadavers."

"I'll skip it."

"What's the matter with you? Sick?"

"Sort of." He didn't feel too good, he told himself. He took two aspirins, and chased them with bourbon, before he went to bed.

8

He spent the next week in the library of the Foreign Service Institute, studying the departmental regulations. Their complexities awed and alarmed him, but Mr. Dannenberg, the head of the training staff, assured him that the orals weren't necessarily based on knowledge of the regulations. "If they were," he said, "nobody would ever get in the Service. It used to be said that there were only three rules for making a good Foreign Service Officer—sit with your back to the light, listen to your superiors, and go to bed before you get drunk. Actually, you learn by osmosis. In the orals

you'll be judged on poise and personality. We want our men to *look* like representatives of the United States. We want them to *look* American."

Dannenberg inspected Jeff, shrewdly as a horseman looks over a yearling at the Saratoga sales. "You do look American. You've got that gaunt, mussed-up Winant look."

"Thanks," Jeff said. "I'd like to be like Winant."

"But nobody can tell yet if you've got any brains."

"No," Jeff said. "That's the trouble."

Mr. Dannenberg himself didn't look like an FSO, or even particularly American. An expensive tailor could have given his stumpy figure and global belly some nobility, but Mr. Dannenberg obviously didn't have an expensive tailor. His trousers fell in double folds around his shoes, and the three lower buttons of his vest were usually open. His ties were cheap, and badly knotted. Jeff looked up Mr. Dannenberg's record, and discovered that while he was a Class I he had never held an important, or even an interesting post. Yet he liked Dannenberg, who always seemed eager to open for him the treasure chest of his experience.

9

One day Dannenberg called him and told him his oral was scheduled for Monday of the following week. "Dress carefully," he advised, "and better not drink Sunday night, and don't cut yourself shaving, and by all means be on time."

Jeff bought a new suit. It was a two-button blue pin stripe, a lounge that was being worn that year by all the successful young men, like Charles Luckman, Bob Considine, Richard Kollmar, and Fred Keller. He paid ninety-five dollars for it, which was more than he had ever paid for a suit before. He also bought black socks, and three white shirts with button-down collars—although his shirt drawer was full—and six handkerchiefs of the best linen that cost as much as shirts used to cost before the war, and a maroon tie that announced itself as at once restrained and expensive.

As an afterthought he bought a hat. He rebelled against hats. He had had to wear a cap as a freshman at Princeton, and he had been compelled to wear either a helmet or a go-to-hell cap during his years in the Army. Hats seemed to him a symbol of compulsion and conformity, and he had not worn one since he had been home. He selected a black homburg, size seven and a quarter. The clerk approved. As he wrote a check the clerk said, "You're in the State Department, aren't you, sir? When you outfit yourself for going abroad, we'll be glad to take care of you."

"Thanks," Jeff said. "Thanks very much." All day he wondered how the clerk could guess.

10

On Monday Jeff reported at Dannenberg's office at ten-thirty, although examination time was not until eleven. Dannenberg seemed excited and fluttery. "It's not going to be here," he said. "It's going to be in the other building. And we've had a surprise. The Secretary himself is going to sit in on the examining board. It's the first time he's ever done it. He's deeply interested in recruitment, you know."

"Will it make a difference?" Jeff asked. "I mean, what'll it do to my chances?"

"Now, don't worry," said Dannenberg, "and don't be nervous. Just sit down and read a magazine, and take it easy, and when the Secretary is ready they'll call and I'll take you over."

Jeff sat down, and picked up a copy of *Fortune*, and turned the pages. His eyes scanned sentences and paragraphs, and pretended to read, but his mind did not know what his eyes were seeing. It was stupid to be scared. The presence of the Secretary might even better his chances, for the others would not want the Secretary to waste his time on a failure. Yet he recalled all the gossip of the awful ordeal of the oral, how even graduates of the Georgetown University school came out of it shaken, inarticulate, and disapproved.

He tried to concentrate on Dannenberg's advice. You should appear confident, and yet respectful; listen carefully to the questions, and don't rush with the answers; don't smoke unless you are offered a cigarette; if you don't know an answer don't attempt to bluff; reply frankly to personal questions, for remember that the whole record of your life will be known to the board before you sit down; and above all don't give opinions, but stick to facts.

Dannenberg's phone rang, and he answered it and said, "We'll be right over." They walked out of the Institute building, and then across the street to the marble and limestone building known as New State, which had been New War but which the War Department had never occupied. Jeff remembered how in his boyhood State had shared offices with War and Navy in the rococo gray pile opposite the White House. Now State spread through twenty-six structures in Washington, and was still growing, and would continue to grow until its size and importance in the Capital was comparable to the power of the United States in the world.

They took an elevator to the fifth floor, passed through a double door over which was the Great Seal, through an anteroom with empty chairs lining its walls, through a secretarial office, and then through two more sets of double doors, and into a room deeply carpeted and utterly soundless, as if it were detached from the building, and from the city. Four men were seated at an oval conference table, with the Secretary at the end. The Secretary's head was down, exposing a bald spot in the gray, and he did not raise his eyes as they entered. He was reading a file of cables. He looked older than his pictures.

Dannenberg waited, standing, until the Secretary closed the file. Jeff was close at his side, trying not to stand to attention. "This is Mr. Baker," Dannenberg said, "who is to take the examination today."

The Secretary rose and put out his hand. "This will be a new experience for both of us," he said, "unless Dannenberg here has put in a ringer who knows all the answers."

"Oh, no sir!" said Dannenberg. "Mr. Baker's name just came up

in the usual order." Dannenberg hadn't noticed that the Secretary was smiling. It was hard to tell when the Secretary smiled. Everything about the Secretary was contained—his strength, the quiet splendor of his bearing, his humor—as if he were conscious of his age and the necessity of conserving his emotions.

Dannenberg introduced the others. "Mr. Matson, Mr. Richards, Mr. Keller."

"We've met before, haven't we?" Jeff said to Keller.

"Oh, yes, of course," Keller said, but Jeff could see he didn't remember. He had heard of the others, but never seen them before. Matson was Chief of the Balkans Division. He had been Minister in Sofia and Bucharest. Richards was also of Career Minister rank, an expert on the Far East.

"All right, Mr. Baker, take this chair," Dannenberg said. Then Dannenberg seated himself at the opposite side of the table, and Jeff realized that Dannenberg would be the fifth man on the board, and that in the instant his manner had changed, and he was impersonal and distant, and seemingly increased in stature.

Dannenberg put his plump, white hands on the table, and said, "Would you care to start, Mr. Secretary?"

"No. You gentlemen follow your usual procedure. I may have a question or two later."

"Would you care to tell us about your schooling, Mr. Baker?" Dannenberg said.

Jeff told them of Lawrenceville and Princeton. He made it brief. He understood that a question like this was simply to put him at ease.

Keller seemed more interested than the others. "What class at Princeton?" he asked.

"Thirty-nine."

"I was twenty-nine myself. Any athletics?"

"No. I went out for freshmen football. Didn't make it. I was on the *Princetonian* staff in my last two years."

"I didn't go in much for the literary side myself," Keller said, "but that sort of training is always useful."

Then the questions began, really. Richards wanted to know whether he could explain the functions of the Far Eastern Commission and the Allied Council for Japan. He could, in a general way. Did he know what parallel separated the American and Russian zones in Korea? Jeff recalled it was the thirty-eighth. What was the agrarian policy of the Kuomintang? He stumbled badly on that one.

The Secretary said, "This is like 'Information Please' in reverse. Five men ask one man questions."

Matson took over. What sixteen nations participated in the ERP conferences? Jeff thought he remembered them all. Outline the importance of the Danube to European economy. That was easy. He knew the Danube. He remembered watching the river in brown flood all one day in Vienna in '46, and seeing not one ship pass. He talked of the Danube as a vital artery now strangled by tourniquets of international red tape. He mentioned the Bulgarian fishing fleet, which for three years had been rotting up the Danube, seven hundred miles from its home ports. He noticed that he had captured the Secretary's attention, and that the Secretary made a note on the cover of his cable file.

Yet his answer did not seem to please Matson. "You understand, Mr. Baker," he said, "that if our people in Austria permitted those boats to go back to the Black Sea, then they'd only be used to catch fish for the other side. That's right, isn't it?"

He saw Dannenberg's eyes raise in mute warning. No opinions. He found himself saying nevertheless, "We cannot make an ally of hunger. That's a matter of national ethics. Furthermore, it's shortsighted to paralyze the Bulgar fishing fleet. It's just handing another propaganda weapon to the Communists in Bulgaria and Rumania."

"Very interesting viewpoint," said Matson. "Very interesting indeed. But obviously arrived at without benefit of complete information."

Matson's dark eyes, large and arresting in the pallor of his face, flicked once towards the Secretary. Otherwise he showed no change

of expression, but Jeff knew he no longer would be friendly. Jeff's frankness was his affliction, and he was unable to control it, as some men cannot curb their temper.

Then the questions began to come in French, in Spanish, in Italian and German. He had been told that when they bothered to test your languages you had a chance.

"Now I'm going to ask you a question we ask all our candidates," Dannenberg said. "Why do you want to join the Foreign Service?"

Could he say that when you were a little boy you looked upon the Department couriers and messengers as most little boys regard firemen and policemen? And that when Tunney and Gehrig and Walter Johnson were the heroes of the other kids on Q Street, your heroes were Ben Franklin, and Silas Deane, and John Jay? Could you say that when you looked at a map, and uttered the names of cities, you heard the music of history? "I've always pointed for it, more or less," he said. "My father was in the Department."

This drew Keller's attention. "A legacy, eh?" he said. "I don't remember any Baker, but I suppose he was before my time."

"Baker? Baker?" murmured Matson. "I don't remember him either. Thought I knew everyone in the Department. But then, he probably was in London when I was in Sofia, and in Shanghai while I was back home. You know how it is."

"He was a clerk," Jeff said.

"Oh," said Keller, and the single syllable was toned with surprise and disappointment, as if he had been examining a handsome ring, and then been told the stone was imitation.

"There was another reason I wanted to get in the Foreign Service," Jeff said. He knew he had to get it out, because it was working inside him.

"Yes?" Dannenberg inquired.

"I don't want to see any more wars. I want to do what I can to prevent another war." He saw that they were all eyeing him now with fresh interest, as if he had told them some private thing about himself that was curious, such as his mother was an Indian, or that

his heart was on his right side. "I suppose that's bombastic," he added, sensing the need of an explanation. "I suppose it's bombastic to think that I can do anything to help keep the peace, being just one little guy. But that's the way I feel, and I know that in the Foreign Service I'd have more opportunity to do what I want to do than anywhere else."

"Well, now, I think that's very commendable," said Matson. "Very commendable indeed."

"Oh, yes," said Richards. "That's a splendid aim." He glanced up at the wall clock, as if from then on they all would be wasting time.

The Secretary raised his head, and Jeff realized he had been watchful, though silent. "I take it you don't like war, Mr. Baker?"

"No sir, I don't."

"What outfit?"

"Eighty-fifth Division, 339th Regiment, sir."

"Coulter was a good general," the Secretary stated, in the professional way that one doctor speaks of another as "a good man." He ran a forefinger along the tabletop, and Jeff knew he was exercising his fabulous memory for the minutiae of battle. He knew something that in the room only he and the Secretary knew—that the Secretary was tracing Jeff's boot prints up the spiny back of the Italian peninsula. He was following Jeff's mad entry into Rome, through the ambushes of the 88s on the road to Florence, edging with him across the minefields on the banks of the Arno. He was witnessing the heartbreaking attack on the Gothic Line, and suffering through the terrible winter in the Apennines, exulting a little in the last assault across the Po, and experiencing the sickening letdown and disillusion that followed victory. "I see," the Secretary said. "I think I see."

"If there are no more questions," Dannenberg said, "I suppose that will be all." They rose, and shook hands, and Dannenberg opened the door for him. "You can find your way out all right?" Dannenberg said. "You'll be informed by letter, in the usual way."

"Thanks very much," Jeff said. "You've been very considerate." He did not think he would see Dannenberg again. He feared he

had failed. As he walked back towards Dupont Circle he tried to analyze his answers. He tried to remember what each one had said, and how they had reacted to him, and how the Secretary had looked when he left. He found he couldn't reconstruct the interview. He must have been very nervous. He looked at his watch. The examination couldn't have lasted more than thirty minutes, yet it seemed like the whole day. It was amazing that this was still morning.

11

After Jeff was gone, Dannenberg took his seat again. Because of the Secretary's presence there was not the usual relaxation after the candidate left. "Well, Mr. Secretary," Dannenberg said, "what did you think of him?"

"I'll wait to hear your reactions," the Secretary said.

"I think on the whole he's a very promising candidate," said Dannenberg. "He has enthusiasm, background, and he knows Europe much better than most men his age."

"He doesn't know Asia," said Richards. "A man ought to be well rounded, as the world is rounded."

Dannenberg tried to estimate the Secretary's opinion, and decided to speak his mind. "On the other hand you can't expect him to have encyclopedic knowledge at his age. What's your opinion, Fred?"

Keller lit a cigarette, tilted his head upward, and slowly blew out the smoke, as if deliberating carefully on his reply. "He's a bit visionary," he said, "but I think he has the makings of a first-class man. I wouldn't mind having him work for me."

"When you said visionary you voiced my objection," said Matson. "We need hard-headed, practical men in the Department today. After all, we're engaged in a life-and-death struggle for our own way of life with a merciless enemy. Why take a chance on a do-gooder?"

"We took a chance on him before," the Secretary said under his breath.

"What's that, Mr. Secretary?" Matson asked.

"Nothing. I'd surmise that he probably was a platoon leader, or

company commander. He got hurt."

Dannenberg inspected the sheet of paper before him, headed REPORT ON FORM 57, BAKER, JEFFERSON WILSON. "There's no record of his having been wounded," he said.

"The way I look at it," said Matson, "is like this. We need realists—tough-minded realists—in the Department today as we never needed them before. Now I know from his spot check that this boy isn't a Communist, or a radical, or anything. But this is war. And the Foreign Service Officers we send abroad at this time are on the front line." Matson held out his hands, gripping an imaginary rifle at the port position. "We don't want woolly-headed dreamers out there. Not that I've got anything against ideals and ethics, you understand. They're all right, at the proper time and place. But the men we send out to defend our system of free enterprise and our democratic way of life have got to be hard-headed realists."

"I think I'll take a chance on him," said the Secretary. "How do you gentlemen vote?"

"As I said before, on the whole I think he's a very promising candidate," said Dannenberg.

"I'd like to have him," said Keller. "I think he could be shaped and molded."

"I've got reservations about giving him a post in the Orient at this time, but he might be all right for Europe," said Richards.

"He is a very personable young man," Matson said. "That I'll admit. And as he grows older he'll no doubt have some good, hard, common sense knocked into him. But right now he should be nursed along. There's a post open in Tananarive, Madagascar, that we always have trouble filling. I think he'd be a good man for there."

"No," said the Secretary. "If he asks for a Southern or Central European job I think he should get it. That's where he belongs."

So that settled it.

As he rose from the table the Secretary said, as if it were an afterthought and of little consequence, "Mr. Matson, would you mind sending me the cables on the Bulgarian fishing boats?"

CHAPTER THREE

1

FOR THE NEXT six weeks Jeff Baker became a blue peg that was moved across a board called "Orientation" in Mr. Dannenberg's office. He absorbed lectures on Atomic Energy and International Security, the Crisis in Britain, India at the Crossroads, The Petropolis Conference, Greece at the Crossroads, Political Problems in Southeast Asia, The Crisis in Germany, France at the Crossroads, The Arab Crisis, Italy at the Crossroads, Why The Straits Are Vital, The Austrian Crisis.

It was also a period of filling out papers and forms. One of these asked where he wanted to go—his "preference sheet." He was allowed four choices, and assured that only very bad luck could keep him from one of the four. He recalled that long ago his father had mentioned that the Department never, never, under any circumstances sent a man to the post of his first choice, probably under the assumption that he had a girl there. He doubted whether this custom had changed.

Originally he had wanted Rome, or Milan, or Trieste, for he knew the terrain of Italy better than he knew any state in his own country, and for the Italian people he felt warm sympathy and big-brotherly tolerance. He put down Shanghai, Trieste, Rome, and Budapest. He hoped it would be Budapest. This would interest and please Susan Pickett, but why it was important to please or interest Susan Pickett he didn't precisely know. He'd called her twice. The

first time she'd been busy, and the second time she'd said, "Jeff, I'm thinking. You understand, don't you?" He'd said sure, he understood, but he didn't understand at all.

Jeff's blue peg moved from the board called "Orientation" to the one called "Processing." He was briefed by the Department's travel experts, chivvied about his insurance and his will, given shots for typhoid, typhus, yellow fever, tetanus, and plague, and exposed to stern and somewhat melodramatic talks on personal security.

When he had been pumped so full of lectures and vaccines that it seemed both his brain and his body must burst, Dannenberg told him he had been assigned to Budapest, and would finish his training on the Balkans desk. "You'll get the big picture of what's going on in your area," he explained. "You'll report to Mr. Matson in Temporary Building P. You probably won't do much except read the dispatches, but that'll keep you busy."

"I want to thank you," Jeff said, "for all your help. That day I took the oral, I thought I'd never make it."

"Quite truthfully, I didn't either, for a while," said Dannenberg. "You know, Baker, sometimes agreeable silence is the best diplomacy. We all learn that. Some of us learn it too late."

"I see," Jeff said.

"I'd stick pretty close to Matson, if I were you. I'd try to understand his viewpoint. Since he'll be your Division Chief while you're at your first post, he'll have a good deal to do with the advancement of your career. He won't be so important as your Chief of Mission, and your senior colleagues, naturally, but it doesn't hurt to have friends in the Department."

"What's Matson's viewpoint?"

"Well, just between us, Matson is a war now man. I think he was a bit alarmed by what you said about war, and you'd do well to make your peace with him."

2

The next day Matson found a desk for Jeff in the Balkans Division. Over this desk began to pass carbons of the incoming file of cables. An American lieutenant had been beaten by the Jugoslavs; three conservative leaders in Rumania had disappeared and were presumed dead; the Cominform in Belgrade was sending propagandists into the Caribbean countries; a Viennese doctor, escaped from a Russian bacteriological warfare laboratory, reported the Russians had been extremely successful in their experiments with anthrax and bubonic plague. Prague was excited about the stepped-up production of the uranium mines in Bohemia, and was wondering what had become of some of our agents in the area. Four Soviet tank divisions were maneuvering in Lower Austria. Budapest said a Swiss traveler had talked to a German scientist who had helped perfect an atomic bomb, in one of the factories beyond the Urals, which would fit into a suitcase. A hand grenade had been thrown at the Legation in Tirana. The Consul in Salonika was sending his wife home.

The monotonous tidings of conflict, terror, and violence sucked at the reservoir of his hope. When he looked out on Constitution Avenue, clean and white in the late summer sun, on the cars shining like bright beetles, on the incessant antlike movement of people, grouping in little patterns, on the girls with hands linked to the arms of their men, it seemed unreal as musical comedy in technicolor. In this building was the real world. One day one of these cables would clatter out of the code machines, just like the others. Only this one would clothe half those puppets in uniform, send that man to Iraq, that woman to Alaska, bury the corner policeman in the rubble of his own home, or wipe them all out, entirely, as a bad production which had remained on stage beyond its time.

3

On the day that the Bulgarian Communists tried and executed Kenov for no greater reason than that he led the opposition, Matson

called Jeff into his office. "Well, Baker," he asked, "what do you think of things? Still anxious for the Balkans?"

"Yes, I still want to go," Jeff said.

"You saw the dispatch about Kenov?"

"Yes, I saw it."

"He was a friend of mine," Matson said. "A good friend. Just as good a friend as any friend I have here in Washington. And he was a gentleman. He's been in my home a dozen times. Furthermore, he was a good public servant. He devoted his life to raising his people out of ignorance and poverty. He opposed the Nazi tyranny, and he opposed the Red tyranny, and now those damn beasts have killed him."

"They're bastards, all right. But do you think all of them are bastards?"

"Enough of them are bastards so sometimes I agree with those who say we can't be far wrong in wiping out the whole bunch, while there's time."

"You can't kill two hundred million people."

"Wouldn't have to. Just kill thirty or forty million, and hang the New York radicals from every lamppost on Fifth Avenue. That's what people are saying and perhaps that's the only answer."

"Isn't that genocide?" Jeff said. He knew he should be quiet. "Isn't that advocating the same thing for which we condemned the Nazis? Incidentally, for which we condemned some of them to death?"

Matson seemed whiter than ever, as if all the blood had fled from his face and hands to feed the hot ball of anger inside him. "I'll take my chances on being condemned," he said. "We are engaged in a struggle for survival—our world against theirs. You have been picked as one of the men to go out in the front line. You should have no doubts."

Jeff had to say it. "But I do have doubts. I'm confused. I feel like I'm wallowing around in a swamp and can't find my way out. I don't know what's right and what's wrong any more. Poor Winant must have felt like this, only worse, because he knew so much more

than I know and I find that the more I know the more I'm confused."

He knew he had mentioned Winant because Dannenberg had said he looked something like Winant, and his subconscious had been considering Winant—and Winant's suicide—ever since. He knew now how dismayed he had been when Winant killed himself, and then Jan Masaryk killed himself. Their deaths had made him feel exactly as if he had lost an older friend out of his platoon. He knew neither of them, yet their deaths were personal.

Matson had been doodling a set of round noseless faces across his blotter. He punctuated them with grim little mouths before he spoke. "What you've just said proves I was right. I don't mind telling you that you're in my Division in spite of my protests. In times like these men of your temperament should be sent to Madagascar or New Zealand, whatever their experience. The Secretary insisted you go to Europe, and Dannenberg gave you to me."

"I didn't know that," Jeff said.

"I'm glad to have you, so long as you behave. You've been picked for Budapest, and you'll go to Budapest next week, and by God you'll go as a soldier. You'll take orders and carry them out."

"Yes, sir," Jeff said, because there wasn't anything else to say.

"I mean that literally," said Matson. "The Legation in Budapest is on a quasi-military footing. We now consider the Embassy in Moscow as nothing more than a garrison under siege, from which there can be few sorties for intelligence and information. But Budapest is a listening post and observation post deep inside the enemy lines. Exactly what you'll do there is up to Admiral Blankenhorn, as Chief of Mission. Maybe he'll let you work under Keller. Maybe he'll make you stable boy. I don't know."

Jeff knew from the cables that Fred Keller had arrived in Budapest a month before, and that his title was Special Assistant to the Minister. No reference to his work ever appeared in the cables. Matson guessed at Jeff's curiosity. "This is extremely confidential," he said. "It is probably the most confidential work going on in my area. You will have to know about it sometime, so I might as well tell you

now. Mr. Keller is forming resistance groups inside Hungary. If it works out there we'll try it in other countries. We call this experiment the Atlantis Project. You know—Atlantis, the bridge between the continents. When war comes, we'll have an organization in Europe."

"When war comes?" Jeff said.

"Yes. War must come. I know it's not diplomatic to say it, but I'm a realist." He spoke with the finality of one who has stated the world is round. Jeff knew there was no use arguing, then or ever. Not with Matson.

4

Gerald Matson anticipated war with Russia with the mingled confidence and impatience of one waiting for the last act of a play in which it is certain the villain will get his just deserts, the hero will get the girl, and everyone will live happily ever after.

While others in the Department had blinded themselves to the Soviet menace, it had always been plain to him, and he had never dodged speaking his mind on it. Sometimes this had not made him popular in the Department. In the first two Roosevelt administrations, when the Reds and their allies—the C.I.O., the New Dealers, the radicals and social planners—had been running the country, he'd been buried in the Visa Division. He'd been able to perform useful services there, however. He'd guarded the dam of immigration quotas, restrictions, and regulations against the stream of refugees from Germany. It wasn't that he had anything against the Jews, although of course he was glad too many didn't get into the Department. It was simply that the National Socialists regarded Communists as their first enemy, and therefore it could be assumed that most of the people getting out of Germany were Communists.

He was in the Mediterranean area when the Spanish war flared, and he was able to use his influence to keep a steady stream of supplies going to Franco, and to discourage American enlistments and other help for the Reds.

When the Russians attacked Finland, and Molotov signed the pact

with Hitler, he was rescued from the blind alley of the Visa Division, and once again sent abroad as a Minister.

His star dipped again when we entered the war, but once the war was over, and the intentions of the Soviet Union began to unfold, he became an important man in the Department who never failed to remind his colleagues that he had recommended the extinction of Bolshevism as far back as 1920, when we still had troops in Siberia.

He himself did not know at what precise point in his life he became aware of the Red menace. It may have started as far away as the dinner table in his boyhood, although it was not called a Red menace at the time, and indeed had no name. His father had his money in street railways in Pennsylvania, and was harassed by agitators, radicals, strikers, the damned Socialists who were advocating public ownership, and the damned laborers who didn't know what was good for them.

While he was at Harvard he became alarmed at the radical talk among some of the undergraduates and wrote a letter to the *Transcript*. The letter was printed, and there was a good deal of comment. His father commended him, praised his literary style, and said the family at last had produced a statesman.

In his second year in the Department he wrote an evaluation of the Lenin-Trotsky dogma of world revolution which was good enough to be used as source material for future studies.

In 1925, while he was in Bucharest, he met and married the lovely, sad-eyed Countess Anya Lewenska. This was before the Department tightened its regulations concerning marriage to foreigners. She was Russian, and the Bolsheviks had murdered her father and mother and confiscated their estates. He was never able to forget this, for in the years that followed their home became a port of call, refueling station, and sometimes a permanent harbor, for her brothers, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, and cousins twice removed.

Gerald Matson's brothers, who now ran the family utilities holdings, kept him informed of the close connections between the Reds in Russia and the Pennsylvania Reds whose unions each year became more powerful and demanding. All his life a Red conspiracy had

been closing in around him, and he knew the only solution was war against Russia. As he constantly warned his colleagues, the United States was engaged in a battle for survival.

5

It was eight that night when Gerald Matson drove to his Alexandria home. For two weeks he had been working late in the Department, for Count Igor Lewenski, his wife's younger brother, was their house guest. The Count's dress shop had failed, and his perfume establishment had failed, and Matson knew he would be wanting capital to start another business. Matson was fending off the inevitable moment when money would be discussed. Whenever they discussed money, it ended with his having less, and the Count more, or at least some.

After coffee Matson remarked that it had been a long time since they had been to a movie, and Bob Hope was playing in Alexandria. He was aware that the Count professed to scorn American comedy, on the grounds that it was not understandable.

The Count, who had his sister's sad eyes, and who for twenty years had defended himself against the ways of this strange land by an air of bewilderment and surprise, as if he had just passed Ellis Island, saw his opportunity. "I hear there is much money in Hollywood—much."

"When did you learn that?" Matson said.

"I hear it. It is said that there is more money in Hollywood than there is in New York. I was told that if I had opened my salon in Hollywood I would have been a huge success. In Hollywood they have respect for blood and ancestry."

Matson made a rude noise with his thin lips.

"Gerald!" his wife said. "Let Iggy say what he has to say! I think he has a very good idea."

"Yes," the Count said. "It came to me last night when I heard the government has ordered there should be anti-Bolshevik pictures."

"The government didn't do any such thing," said Matson. "Some

Congressman merely suggested it. The government can't order movies made."

The Count shrugged. "When anti-Bolshevist pictures are made they will need technical advice. I will be there. It will be a great chance to make money and inform everyone about the Bolsheviks too."

"Meanwhile," said the Countess, "Iggy can open a dress shop. He will no doubt meet influential people. When they need technical advice he will be available. I think it's a remarkable idea."

"Yes," said the Count, "it will be a double opportunity."

"Iggy doesn't want another loan," said the Countess. "He just wants you to make an investment."

Matson knew he was trapped, yet he continued to struggle. "We'll discuss it tomorrow. I'm tired. They keep unloading pacifists on me. It's disheartening." He could always distract his wife with Department shop talk.

"Pacifists!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, pacifists." He told them about Jeff Baker, and how he had tried, unsuccessfully, to keep this dreamer out of the Department, and then out of Europe, and finally out of his own Division.

"Sometimes," said the Count, "it is apparent this government is crazy—insane. How this country ever became the leader among the nations is to me utterly incredible."

"And if he goes to Budapest he will work on the Atlantis Project?" said Anya.

"He might." Anya was still beautiful, and an imaginative and popular hostess, and she had been a great help to him in his career, but sometimes he wished she would not speak so carelessly of secret matters.

"What is this Atlantis Project?" asked Iggy.

"I don't think it should be discussed here, Anya," Matson said.

"Now, Gerald, don't be ridiculous. Iggy is one of the family, and anyway he'd be the last person in the world to mention it. I think it would be much safer to tell Iggy than have men like this Baker know about it, and perhaps even get into it."

"I don't want it discussed!" Matson said. He decanted a thimbleful of brandy into one of his King Alexander glasses.

"Don't you trust me?" the Count asked. "Me, your own brother-in-law—me, a man who is a victim of the Bolsheviks?"

"Gerald, you're so silly," Anya said. She talked on, and before Matson could stop her she had said, "I think it's the most wonderful idea, to build another underground."

"Shut up!" Matson yelled.

"Come, come," said the Count. "No quarreling. I don't wish to know your secrets, Gerald, if you do not trust me." He poured brandy to the rim of his glass. "I drink to the downfall of the Bolsheviks!"

"To their end," Matson said mechanically, and raised his own glass. It had to come sooner or later, and it was his judgment that the sooner it came the better. It should come before the Reds had atom bombs. To the war! The war would end this constant rasping of his nerves, his worry over money and his future in the Department. The war would eliminate the radicals and emasculate the unions and placate his brothers. The war would give jobs to his in-laws, and eventually send them back to their estates in Russia. For Matson, the war would mean peace.

CHAPTER FOUR

1

THE DAY BEFORE Jeff Baker was to leave for Budapest Matson summoned him to his office and said, "I had a call for you from Horace Locke. He wants to see you before you leave. Friend of yours?"

"Horace Locke? No, but I've heard my father speak of him. I haven't heard his name in years. I thought he was retired, or dead, or something."

"He isn't, but he should be."

"Yes?"

"He isn't very well liked in the Department. He's outlived his time, and should be out on pension. I wouldn't take anything he says too seriously. That's just a friendly hint."

"Thanks," Jeff said. He had tried to follow Dannenberg's advice, and understand Matson's viewpoint. He had been attentive, respectful, and had muffled his own opinions as much as he could. He tried to agree, at least outwardly, with whatever Matson had to say, as he did now.

"You're not to talk about anything that goes on in this Division."

"I won't, sir." He could not bring himself to like Matson. When he talked to Matson he felt that his distaste, no matter how carefully he censored it from his voice and masked it from his face, must somehow show, for he knew Matson could feel it. It was as if, like a dog, he exuded a hostile odor, for he could feel Matson bristle.

"If Locke has anything to say about this Division I want a complete report on it. He sometimes tries to start trouble."

"Yes, sir."

2

Jeff found Horace Locke on the second floor of Old State, across the street from the White House. The Department, in return for New War, had ceded Old State to the Presidential special agencies, so Horace Locke's office was like a forgotten island around which eddied and bubbled the activity of a foreign sea. On the office door hung a sign—"Adviser to the Diplomatic Monuments and Memorials Commission."

There was no anteroom, no secretary, no typists or messengers. There was only a thin, wispy, white-haired man, dressed in tweeds that were soft and silky with years, small in his loneliness. On his desk was the minimum issue, for one of Career Minister rank, of double pen set, water flask and glasses, metal calendar, two telephones, and in and out files, empty.

Jeff had expected he would be infirm, or dull-witted or cantankerous with age, but actually he didn't appear so old. He certainly wasn't any older than the Secretary of State, and he didn't seem much older than Dannenberg or Matson. His manner was composed and yet alert, his handshake quick and steady. "You're Baker, eh? Your father was Nicholas Baker, isn't that right?" he began.

"That's right, sir," Jeff said.

"I thought so. Didn't think there would be two Jefferson Wilson Bakers. Can you pull up one of those leather chairs? Don't know whether they're comfortable or not. Nobody ever sits in them." He waited until Jeff moved the chair, and then he said, "How proud your father would have been—how very proud! Guess I'll have to be proud for him. We were good friends, you know."

"I've heard him speak of you quite often."

"It was only luck that I knew you'd made the Foreign Service. Saw your name this morning in the Department bulletin. That's all that ever crosses my desk, now, the daily bulletin."

Jeff knew he should say something, but he was afraid that whatever he said would be wrong. Horace Locke was obviously in an uncomfortable position, and perhaps it would embarrass him to refer to it.

For a moment Horace Locke remained silent, too, although his clear gray eyes were inspecting Jeff, drinking in detail, analyzing, judging. "If I had known sooner," he said, "there are some things I could have—." He shook his head. "No, I couldn't have been of any help to you. Sometimes I forget I'm no longer a Division Chief. Anyway, you did all right for yourself. You're an FSO, Class V, and you're going to Budapest. That's good. What's your job going to be?"

"I don't know, exactly. I'll be one of the Third Secretaries."

They talked of Jeff's father. The way Horace Locke talked, Nicholas Baker had been much more influential, in the Department, than Jeff had ever guessed. Jeff remarked about this, and Locke said:

"Don't underestimate your own importance. Foreign policy is not made by speeches, or treaties, or directives, or proclamations. It is made by men, and what they do. That's why I stay in the Department. I've got too big a stake in the Twentieth Century to pick up my chips and get out. Some day I might be able to do something again."

Jeff said, "I did something once."

"What's that you said?"

"Oh, nothing," Jeff said.

3

He said, "Oh, nothing," but he knew now that it was something. It was something he couldn't speak of. He hadn't learned until much later what it meant. He hadn't known a military axiom—that the action of a junior officer can sometimes influence a skirmish, an engagement, a battle, a campaign, a war. History.

Nobody in the General's War Room back in Florence—a War Room in a tent, but commodious and comfortable nevertheless—

selected Jeff Baker to be the spearhead, the point, of the offensive against the Gothic Line in September of 1944. The General himself was not responsible for the offensive. It was ordered by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, who were worried. The Germans were planning to pull four divisions out of Italy and send them to the Western Front. If this happened the offensive in the West, already gasping for supplies, would certainly bog down. And if the logistics disease became worse, and the Germans counterattacked in the winter, those four extra divisions would become enormously important. So the General in Florence received a directive to attack the Apennines frontally from the south. If he pushed through to the plains of the Po beyond, that would be wonderful but most unlikely. In all history no army had ever successfully shoved upward through the shark jaws of the Apennines. That's exactly the way it was—like pushing one's naked hand through a shark's clenched jaws. If the four German divisions could not leave Italy—if they could be contained—that would be enough.

Back in Florence the General selected the 91st Division to assault Futa Pass, and fight its way up Route 65, the only hard-surfaced, all-weather road across the mountains. But before Futa Pass could be stormed and held, it was necessary to capture the high ground which commanded the pass. For this task the General selected the 85th Division, which was fresh and rested.

The general commanding the 85th looked over his maps, and saw that there were two mountains—Altuzzo and Traconi—that he must take. Between them rose a hill, unnamed and with its exact height not given, which could be useful if captured. He assigned the 339th Infantry Regiment to Altuzzo, the taller of the two peaks.

The colonel commanding the 339th, a West Pointer immensely proud of his regiment, planned to assault Altuzzo with one battalion during the night, and send in another battalion at daybreak, and keep his third in reserve. From his command post in an abandoned villa in Scarperia, curtained from German observation and fire only by a row of willows, the colonel looked up at Altuzzo and knew he would need all three.

It happened that Jeff's battalion was picked for the night attack, and his company was picked by the battalion commander as the spearhead, and his Old Man chose Baker's platoon as the point. So it was just accident that Jeff Baker led the attack on the Gothic Line.

It turned out that Jeff Baker's platoon did better than expected, and Futa Pass was stormed and held. They named a mountain after him. They called it Baker's Peak. People said we might never have got Futa Pass except for Baker's Peak. The four German divisions were contained according to plan, and final victory came in the spring.

Jeff never spoke of it, and indeed wished he could banish it entirely from his mind, for he felt more guilt than pride in his part in it. He had survived, but the crucible of fire had been too hot. It had altered the tensile strength of his inner metal.

4

Jeff said, "Mr. Locke, I'm sure with all your experience you'll be called on eventually. But why can't you do anything now?"

Horace Locke didn't seem to hear. He leaned back in his chair and half turned, so that he looked out over the White House, and The Hill beyond. "We were so proud of the Twentieth Century," he said softly. "Why, we even named a train after it."

"What happened to you? Why aren't you a Chief of Division any more?" Jeff hazarded.

"I'm going to answer you," Locke said, his voice still low. "Because I have dangerous and unfashionable thoughts. Because I won't go along with the 'you're another' school of diplomacy. Because I believe we can have another war, or we can have civilization. We cannot have them both."

Jeff said, "Maybe I've got dangerous and unfashionable thoughts too."

"Knowing your father, I thought you would have. But we are not alone. We are only two in a great majority. True, it is a majority inarticulate, confused, and almost ashamed of displaying its consum-

ing will for peace. We turned over our leadership to those who have a vested interest in war, and we have had trouble getting it back. My judgment tells me that we will never get it back, that the odds are for another war, and the dissolving of all our rights and freedoms. We will believe that thus we can beat the Russians, and survive. But if we survive it will be only as blind ants underground, fearfully guarding their eggs and breeding more soldier ants so they can continue to exist, always blind and underground."

"That's a pretty black picture."

"I know it. We have the choice of believing Patton, who said, 'Man is war,' or of believing Sherman. I'm afraid we'll believe Patton."

Jeff thought of the *Nebelwürfe* coming in on the slopes of Mt. Altuzzo, and the terrible winter of '44, when it was always cold and always wet on Route 65, which the homesick doughs called Easy Street. "When it comes," he laughed, "I want to be the guy who hands out the doughnuts on the dock at Hoboken."

Horace Locke smiled, as though he had followed Jeff's chain of thought perfectly. "I don't think that would help you much. There was 'Remember the *Maine*,' and then there was 'Remember Pearl Harbor,' and the next one will be 'Remember New York.'"

He paused, and the smile disappeared. "In every country are men who want war for one reason or another. The military we can understand. They have been trained and educated for one purpose, and when they pursue their *raison d'être* it is understandable. But there are many others who want war, and their motives are not always so clear as, say, the greed of our local Krupps, and the fear and suspicion of the men in the Kremlin. All of them have some personal reason—and to them a good reason—for bringing down the house of man in atomic shambles."

"So what can we do?" said Jeff.

"We do what we can. It won't be much, but more than most. Most people cannot make themselves heard above the din for war. In the Foreign Service you can observe, you can report, you can even act."

"I hope so. But I'm not sure how."

"I can't tell you. You'll know when the time comes."

"A Third Secretary can't do much."

"You'd be surprised what Third Secretaries have done. Of course they can bottle you up. They can stop all your reports. But there's even a way to get around that. It's been used many times."

"Yes?"

"When you have something to say, and you cannot say it officially, put it in a letter to some friend in the Department. A man you trust."

"Isn't there a regulation about that?"

"There is, but it's pretty elastic."

"I don't have any friends in the Department," Jeff said.

"You can have me."

Jeff wondered whether he was engaging in a conspiracy. He didn't feel as if it were a conspiracy. It seemed perfectly natural and normal. "I'll remember that," he said.

"I don't know whether I'll be able to do anything with what you write me, if you do write," Horace Locke said, "but I'll try." He put his hands on the arms of his chair, and Jeff knew their talk was over. "I have to keep trying," Locke said as he rose, "until they finally kick me out of here. But I'm afraid it is hopeless. If there is to be peace, it must be dictated from up there." He pointed his hand towards the old-fashioned, soaring ceiling, not self-consciously, but matter-of-fact as if of a certainty there were something up there.

Jeff could not help but look, and there was nothing up there except an embossed Great Seal, dirty and yellowing, and Jeff realized this once had been part of the suite of the Secretary of State.

CHAPTER FIVE

1

JEFF BAKER SPENT the rest of that day completing the list of purchases recommended by the travel experts in the processing section. He had been told that you could not be certain of buying anything in Budapest—a city where once you could buy everything—that the Mission maintained no commissary, and there was no PX closer than Vienna.

He bought vitamin pills, lighter flints, chocolate, sulfadiazine, a hundred razor blades and spare razor, a portable radio adjustable for all current frequencies, two dozen cakes of soap, and six tooth brushes.

2

He went back to the apartment and began to pack. As a Third Secretary and Vice-Consul he was entitled to a number of privileges, among them a five-gun salute when boarding a man-of-war, and an extra eighty-pound weight allowance on trans-ocean planes. So that gave him a hundred and thirty-five pounds in all. He found he could get almost everything he possessed, except his books, into the four-suiter, the two-suiter, and the pullman bag, all new and unscarred by travel.

He was even able to pack his maps. He collected maps as some men collect old theater stubs and programs, or first editions, or circus posters. He could look at a map with the rhapsody of a botanist

examining a prize orchid. He knew maps. He loved maps. Everything on earth seemed to change except its contour, the depth of its oceans, the heights of its mountains. Maps were solid things. You could depend on a map.

He didn't pack the written and photographic memories of his father. He would ask Stud to put them in a safe deposit vault. He wasn't sure why he wanted to keep them, but he did want to keep them. He felt he could depend on them, too. Wasn't that a silly feeling?

He had also bought a diplomatic dispatch case, of handsome pigskin, tooled in London. It had cost him forty-five dollars, and this seemed a lot of money, especially when he had nothing to put in it except a handful of personal papers, and the parchment commission, carefully enclosed in cellophane, in which the President of the United States said he reposed "special trust and confidence in your Integrity, Prudence, and Fidelity." He was enamored of the dispatch case as a woman with her first mink wrap. It was the patent of his office, the insignia of his rank. Anthony Eden could possess no better. He was admiring its austere beauty, standing on the table with his black homburg beside it, when Susan Pickett called.

She said she'd just heard from a girl in Balkans that he was leaving soon, and she hoped he'd drop in and see her before he left.

"I'm flying at seven in the morning," he said.

"Oh! I didn't know it was that soon." She sounded upset. "I suppose you're awfully busy, packing and saying goodbye. I guess you won't have time."

"I'm all packed," Jeff said. "I've said all the goodbyes I have to say."

"Except me."

"Except you." He discovered that when he visualized her at the other end of the phone, it stimulated and exhilarated him almost as if he could touch her. It was a phenomenon at once pleasant and improbable of fulfillment, like a schoolboy's desire for the prettiest girl in the senior class.

"Well?" she challenged.

"Can I see you?" Immediately her reply became important. If she already had a date, or she was tired, or busy, or he could come over but only for a few minutes, then it was going to mean much more to him than a barren final night in Washington. If she said no, he was going to be miserable for a long time. He had committed himself.

"I wish you would come over."

"I'll be over right away."

"Not too quickly. Give me an hour. I just got home."

"Okay. An hour."

He didn't need a shave, but he shaved anyway. He spent an unnecessary length of time changing his shirt, and he had trouble knotting his tie. He found he didn't have proper control over his fingers. They insisted on shaking. Maybe I'm in love with her, he told himself. Maybe this is the way love is, exciting and adventurous the way it was when I was sixteen. More of an adventure than flying to Europe in the morning. Much more.

He told himself he couldn't possibly be in love with Susan Pickett. He'd only been out with her once. Besides, he had always believed that when he fell in love with a girl he would think of marriage, and he wasn't thinking of marriage at all. He was just wondering what she'd do, if anything, this night. His mind was racing from one imaginary scene to another, savoring the possibilities. In a vague way he felt this was somewhat sinful, if he really was in love with her, and wondered whether the thoughts of other men were as gross as his own. He couldn't imagine his father ever thinking as he thought now. Others of his own generation, yes. His generation had attained a certain sophistication about sex. His generation had broken the puritan chains. His generation had traveled. His generation had been around.

3

He was at her apartment in an hour, exactly. She took his black homburg, smiled as she smoothed the new felt, and dropped it on a

bookcase. Then she turned and raised her eyes to his, directly, as if to ask an important question, but all she said was, "Drink?"

"Please."

"Rye, right?"

"Right." She seemed different. It wasn't her dress alone. She wore a white blouse with a gold pin at her shoulder, and a black ballet skirt that seemed to possess rhythm of its own, and that eddied and swirled with her smallest movement. As she moved to the teak bar he noticed that her hair was different. It was loose and smooth like dark velvet brushing her shoulders.

Then he noticed that the room too was different. A room changes with the character of its owner, so slowly and subtly that it is always noticed first by the stranger, not by the one who lives there. Exactly how it had changed was difficult to say. Some pieces had been added, some subtracted. He believed the rattan occasional chair was new, but he could not be sure. The room seemed more colorful, yet it was bare of pictures. Even the photograph of the Marine Corps colonel was gone from the end table.

He sensed that this night would be different from the last time, and that there would be no need to persuade, flatter, cajole, or arouse her. He walked to her side at the bar. He took the just-made drinks from her hands and set them down on the dark wood. He put his arms around her, and he could feel her hands, wet and cold from the ice, at the back of his neck. She strained herself close, and he marveled that she could fit so perfectly and tightly against him. He held her like that until he had to catch his breath, and then he kissed her eyes and her mouth and her ears and the base of her throat and her breasts under the loose, silken blouse.

"You're ruining me," she said finally. "There isn't any hurry, Jeff."

"Yes there is," he said. "I'll be on an airplane in eleven hours."

"That's time enough."

"It's no time at all."

"At least we can have our drinks. I dressed very carefully for

you, darling, and I'd like to keep my clothes on for another five minutes."

"Okay," he agreed. "Five minutes."

But it really wasn't that long.

Some time later—it must have been much later for the traffic noises were infrequent outside on the avenue—he awoke and started to rise. Her arm was across his shoulders, and the arm pressed him back. He lay still for a moment, reveling in the delicious relaxation, and her nearness, and his pride of mastery and possession. Then he said, "I'm hungry. I want a cigarette."

"Hush," she said. "In a while."

"What time is it?"

"About one."

"Six hours more. I don't want to go."

"Less than six. We'll have to leave here at five if you're going to make that plane."

"I'm hungry," he insisted. "I was planning to take you to Hall's again tonight."

"I made sandwiches," she said. "Wrapped them in wax paper so they'd be fresh."

"How did you know we weren't going to eat out?"

She put her head on his chest and laughed. "Do you want whiskey," she asked, "or milk?"

"Both."

Then for a time it was Susan who slept while he remained awake. He propped his head on one hand, and smoked, and looked down on her, breathing slowly and quietly, her skin pale ivory in the reflected light of stars and street lamps.

At four he woke her with his lips, and she responded to him, her eyes still closed.

"One for the road?" she whispered.

"One for the road."

They left her apartment at five, at an hour when all else in the city was still, and even the drying August leaves slept silent, waiting for the morning breeze from the river to shake them into life. They walked together without speaking, their footsteps strangely distinct on the empty pavement, her hand under his elbow, her shoulder pressed close to his arm. Jeff's legs felt hollow and numb. They didn't feel like part of him. They moved of themselves.

He thought, this is a dream. I'm going to wake up in a minute and find I've got what's left of the night to toss and want her, and try to bring back this dream. She didn't call me. I didn't possess her all the night. Girls like her don't do things like that for guys like me.

He saw a bus stop ahead, on Dupont Circle, and heard the squeal of its brakes. This was real, all right, but it didn't seem credible that she should be walking at his side now, and in twenty-four hours he would be in Budapest. It was unreal and frightening that he might never have her again. He would not come home for three years, and in that time anything could happen, and something was almost sure to happen. Now that she had overcome her fear, conquered her phobia, she might find someone else. Probably would. Almost certainly would.

"What are you thinking of?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing."

"I was thinking of nothing, too. It's going to be bad, isn't it?"

"It's going to be rough." Her understanding was part of this miracle, this sense of joining, of union, of oneness.

Yet there wasn't any possibility of marriage. The Department disapproved of love, altogether. Love was a force operating beyond the bounds of directives, protocol, rank, regulations, act of Congress, and even the taboos of nationality and race. It was an unpredictable plague that could smite a distinguished Career Minister, as well as a Class VI FSR, cause him to ship his family back home, and set

him to doing the rhumba in a third-rate Rio dive. It caused couriers to forget their crossed bags, cryptographers to chatter of their codes, and Division Chiefs to make fools of themselves over Washington debutantes.

The Department took a dim view of marriage. If an FSO wanted to marry a foreign girl he had to submit his resignation, and usually he could count on its being accepted. And in that day there weren't many American girls loose outside their own land, except in Departmental staff. And it was absolutely forbidden that he marry a girl within the Department, a hangover from the Hoover economy years when it was considered a dangerous drain on the Treasury for both husband and wife to draw salaries from the government.

The Department trusted that an FSO would not marry until he was a Class II or III. Then it was hoped that he would go back to his home town and choose a wife who would not only be socially acceptable but who would have an adequate private income. A Class V, completely dependent upon his salary, and still in his probationary period, could not ask a girl to quit a job that paid as well as his own, and join him in a career that marriage would automatically limit and cripple. He wondered whether Susan had thought at all of marriage. He didn't dare ask.

They turned into Riggs Court, and Susan said she'd wait at the Circle and try to stop, and hold, a cab. He said that was fine. He knew that was a delicate way of saying she didn't want to go to his rooms, where Stud Beecham would see her, and know where his roommate had spent the night.

The apartment displayed the relics of a party—overflowing ash trays, glasses with water melted from ice cubes standing in their bottoms, the debris of sandwiches, olive stones. He shook Stud out of sleep. Stud said, "What time is it? Where the hell have you been?"

"It's five-thirty. I've been out."

"I'll say you've been out. We had a party for you. A surprise going-away party. All the old gang. The surprise was you didn't turn up."

"I'm sorry," Jeff said.

"Woman?"

"Uh-huh."

"Well, I guess you'll have to be excused. Who was she?"

Jeff was strapping the four-suiter. He grunted.

"If you wait a minute," Stud said, "I'll pull on my clothes and help you out with that stuff and take you to the airport."

"Oh, no. You stay in bed. I can handle it fine."

"She must be waiting downstairs," Stud said.

"Mind your own damn business."

"Why don't you take her with you?"

"You go to hell."

"I'll bet I know who it is," Stud said. "I'll bet I know!" He got out of bed and looked out at the sky. "Going to be good flying weather," he decided. "But I'm glad it's you, and not me. I hate airplanes. Airplanes are strictly for the birds. Man wasn't meant to fly. What are your stops?"

"Gander," Jeff said, "Shannon, Prague, Vienna."

"And sometimes," said Stud, "they stop in the middle of the ocean."

They carried the bags to the bottom of the stairs, and then a taxi driver appeared to help him. "Goodbye, chum," Stud said. "Remember to brush your teeth every day, and mail your laundry home Fridays."

"So long," said Jeff. "See you in three years."

"The lady," said the taxi driver, "says for you to hurry."

5

They didn't talk much on the way to the airport. He said the Lincoln Memorial was always beautiful at this time in the morning. She said wasn't it, but she thought the Jefferson Memorial was more graceful. He said he liked the Jefferson Memorial too, particularly when the cherry blossoms were coming out around the Tidal Basin.

They swung down to the Mount Vernon Highway, and she

grabbed his arm tightly, on the curve, and clung to him. "That'll be in April," she said.

"What'll be in April?"

"The cherry blossoms. I wonder where you'll be in April, who you'll be with, what you'll be doing?"

"I wish I could be right here," Jeff said.

"But you can't."

"No, I can't."

Then they were at the National Airport, clean and fresh from its pre-dawn scrubbing and yet surprisingly busy for the hour, and the porters had his luggage. They walked to the Pan-American counter, the uniformed ticket agent checked his name on the manifest, and he found himself caught up in the smooth conveyor belt that in twenty minutes weighs and loads exactly fifty-six thousand pounds of passengers, luggage, mail, and freight on a trans-Atlantic plane. He exhibited his ticket, his virgin diplomatic passport, his government immunization register. His next of kin, he was forced to recall, was Aunt Martha, in Chicago, whom he had neglected to write for six months, and who had no idea he was on the way to Europe.

"I suppose you'll carry your dispatch case with you, Mr. Baker," the ticket agent suggested.

"Oh, yes, of course." It had been stupid of him to forget that an FSO never checked his dispatch case along with the other luggage. A dispatch case was part of a man.

The agent brought it out from behind the counter. Its handle felt good in his hand.

Not until then did he realize Susan was no longer at his side. He was searching for her, his eyes sweeping the rows of benches facing the great windows looking out on the runways, when an airline captain touched his arm. "You're Mr. Baker, of the State Department?"

"Yes."

"I'm Bill Judson. I take your flight as far as Shannon. If you get

bored, come on up front and I'll show you how our new flying machine works."

Jeff smiled. "Thanks very much. That's awfully good of you." He knew he had received the equivalent of a five-gun salute. He felt good all over.

Over the captain's shoulder he spotted her. Her arms were loaded, and she was looking for him. "You'll excuse me," he told the pilot, and then shouted across the waiting room, "Hey, Susie!" The pilot grinned, and other people turned and stared. But she heard.

She'd shopped the magazine stand. She said she thought he ought to have plenty of magazines—"They'll be welcome in the Mission so don't throw them away." And the new H. Allen Smith book. And cigarettes.

"Five cartons!" he said. "I don't know whether they'll let me carry that many through customs."

She dropped everything on a bench, and then tapped his dispatch case. "That's what this is for. Didn't you know?"

"I'm learning," he said. He sat down beside her, put the dispatch case across his knees, unsnapped the locks, and fitted the cartons inside.

"That's a lovely thing," she said, rubbing her fingers along the perfect grain of the leather. "I hope some day it carries—I'm not sure what. But something thrilling. Something extra wonderful. Something for all of us. Something to wipe our fear away."

"I thought you'd got over it."

"I've rationalized it, some, but I can't get rid of it. Who can? There isn't a person in this country, Jeff, who at least once each day doesn't think of war. It's a permanent hazard, tangible as a fog that never blows away. It colors everything we do. Nobody can make a decision—business or personal—without considering it."

"Susan, what's going to happen to us from here in—I mean you and me?"

She looked at the clock. "There is so much we could talk about—and no time. I don't think we'd better plan—do you, Jeff?"

"No, I guess not. I just want you to sit quiet. I want to memorize you."

She looked down at her fingers, locked together in her lap. "There's something else I have to say."

"Go ahead."

"I just wanted to tell you you don't have to worry."

"Worry? About what?"

"About last night. No remorse. No obligations."

He leaned over, and kissed her hair, and said, "I want obligations, darling," and the loudspeakers began to whine, and somebody coughed into the microphone. Then the loudspeakers said Flight 86 was loading at Gate 3 for Shannon, Prague, Vienna, and Budapest.

They rose and moved together towards the gate, becoming part of a funnel of people, the spout of which ended under a sign saying, "Passengers Only."

They were pushed close together, and she said, "I guess this is the end of the line for me." She kissed him once on the lips, lightly so as not to smear him.

The gate opened, and he was carried through it with the stream of people, and she was left outside.

CHAPTER SIX

1

JEFF BAKER GOT his assignment his first night in Budapest. He had, of course, reported to the Minister the morning of his arrival; that is, he reported to Morgan Collingwood, the Consul General, who was senior Foreign Service Officer, and Morgan Collingwood had presented him to the Admiral, which was the proper procedure.

Mr. Collingwood's manner didn't fit his resounding name. Mr. Collingwood was a slight, balding man who looked like the oldest and most inconspicuous vice president in a bank—the one who sits farthest from the rail, and approves all the important loans. But the Admiral looked like an admiral. His hair was white as the crest of a breaker, his face red as if he had just stepped off a gale-swept bridge, and his eyes a deep and startling blue, as if they had absorbed the pigment of smooth tropic seas and unclouded tropic skies.

The Legation's offices spread through three floors of a modern stone and concrete and chrome and glass building on Szabadzag-tér off Bathory Utca. It was not far from the Parliament, the Bourse, and the Palace of Justice, and had once been occupied by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Admiral's office was on the topmost of the three floors. He sat behind an executive desk that might have been imported from America, and the desk was framed between the Stars and Stripes and the two-star flag of his rank. On the wall behind him were pictures of Theodore Roosevelt, reviewing the Great White Fleet, Franklin Roosevelt when he was Assistant

Secretary of the Navy, and the battleship *Wyoming*. If you could shut out the view of the Danube with its shattered bridges dangling their broken steel arms in the water, and ruined Buda on the other bank, the office could have been in Washington.

Mr. Collingwood said, "This is Mr. Baker, just in this morning from Washington. We had a cable about him a few days ago."

"Oh, yes," the Admiral said. "Glad to have you aboard, Baker."

On the Admiral's desk were tiny, perfect models of four destroyers, a cruiser, and an aircraft carrier. Before they all sat down he rearranged them, putting the cruiser in the van, and aligning the destroyers on each side of the carrier, in accepted flanking position. The Admiral inquired about his trip, and his lodgings. Jeff told him it was a smooth trip, and he had slept most of the way across, and he was staying at the Astoria Hotel, but that Quincy Todd had promised to find him a small apartment.

"Todd met the plane at Matyasföld, as usual," said Collingwood.

"Young Todd," the Admiral said, "makes an excellent flag secretary. Fine for the housekeeping chores. He'll show you around. Speaks the language. You don't, do you?"

"No, sir," Jeff said. "I've got Italian and French and German, but no Hungarian. I was going to take lessons."

"Won't need to," said the Admiral. "It's the same here as every place else. All the educated people speak English. Now you take me. I've been every place in the world. Spent my whole life traveling around the world. Never had to speak anything but English."

The Admiral asked how things were at home, and Jeff told him things were about the same, and the Admiral shook his head as if that were bad, and said, "I want you to come up to my place for dinner tonight. I want a first-hand picture of the situation in the States. Like my intelligence fresh. Besides, Fred Keller will be there. I want you to work with him. Sort of a special project."

"Is Mr. Keller in the building?" Jeff asked.

"You know him, don't you?"

"Yes, we've met."

"He mentioned it. He's not in the building. You see, Baker, he

has a very, very special job. Very delicate. He operates entirely outside the Legation. Deals with people who can't afford to be seen going in and out of here. You understand, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, sir. You mean the Atlantis Project."

Jeff knew from the way Collingwood started, and from the Admiral's face, which lost all its affability, that he had said the wrong thing.

"Where did you hear Atlantis Project?" the Admiral demanded.

"In Washington, sir."

"God damned fumbling fools!" the Admiral said, slowly shaking his head from side to side. "Here we break our necks to insure security and those blabbermouthed bastards talk about it all over the place!"

"I was warned that it was extremely confidential," Jeff protested. "Naturally I wouldn't ever mention it except, well, here."

"Confidential hell! It's classified top secret! They had no right to tell *anybody*!"

The Admiral let out his breath, almost in a whistle, and said, "Well, I guess there's no damage, because I'm going to use you on the job. But it's just as I've always said—it's a mistake to have generals running the State Department. They don't know what security means. Ought to have Navy men."

The Admiral slapped his palm on the desk and capsized the cruiser. "Now look, Baker, from now on I never want you to mention the word Atlantis. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you'll be at my place at seven. Todd will see to your transportation."

"I'll be there, sir." He was glad to get out of the Admiral's office.

2

Jeff spent the rest of the day with Quincy Todd. Todd was a stocky man with pink, round, beardless cheeks, and brows and lashes so blond and pale that they offered no concealment to his

eyes, and forced him to stare out upon the world in perpetual astonishment. His face looked five years younger than Jeff's, but his double-breasted suit strained to conceal a paunch, and Jeff guessed he was older. He also was a Third Secretary and Vice-Consul, but he had slipped into the job that some missions call "stableboy" and others "donkey boy." This meant that he did a great many chores that had nothing to do with diplomacy, except that if they were not done the machinery of the Legation would stop.

He wheedled gasoline out of the Hungarian Ministry of Transport, argued exchange with the Finance Minister, and fought the Ministry of the Interior, when employes of the Legation fell into the hands of the police, or simply disappeared. He knew his way around the Russian Kommandatura, and the intricacies of the Soviet bureaucracy. If a truckload of canned food, or a correspondent, or a typewriter, or a courier vanished on the road from Vienna to Budapest, he knew where to find it, or him. He did all these odd jobs so well that there was no thought of replacing him. He was a square peg tightly wedged into a square hole, and not an hour passed that he didn't curse his knowledge of the Hungarian tongue, and his talent for trouble-shooting.

He shepherded Jeff from office to office, presenting him to the staff. As he introduced the men, and a few women, he identified them by their jobs. He said, "This is Mr. Kovacs, our chief disbursing officer," or, "This is Captain Reedy, our Assistant Air Attaché." But some he introduced simply by their names, without referring to their jobs, and Jeff knew that this was because for one reason or another their affiliations or assignments were considered confidential. Eventually he would grow to know all of them, and something of what they were doing, but in the beginning they would be mysterious. These men seemed as much in a pattern as those in blue suits, and those in uniform. They all appeared to own gabardine trench coats and pork pie hats. And while their ages must have differed, they all seemed the same age, like stones in a wall.

His mind blurred with the strange faces tagged with new names, few of which he remembered. He knew this would soon change.

In a few weeks the faces would become all too familiar, like fellow passengers on a long cruise. When it was finished Todd said, "Let's have a drink."

Jeff said, "I need one."

Todd said, "There's an *espresso* around the corner where I can always get fair cognac. I'll cut you in on it."

He knew he was going to like Todd, but if he had been asked why he knew this he would only have been able to say, "He speaks my language." He hoped that as soon as they were seated behind their drinks Todd would brief him on the Legation. What he had seen was much more complex than indicated by the table of organization charts in Washington. Yet it had probably formed itself to meet the challenge of place and time. He was eager to know all about it, and become part of it, as quickly as possible.

Out on the street he put aside his preoccupation to begin his assessment of the city and its people. Pest was not a ruin like Buda. Here in Pest the streets were free of rubble. New plaster and unpainted boards, ugly as scar tissue, had grown across the wounds in the buildings. The people seemed as well dressed, generally, as you would see in the poorer sections of Brooklyn, or Baltimore, or Boston. But this was not a poor section of Budapest. This was the center of finance, and culture, and government. On the Bathory Utca he and Quincy Todd were by far the best dressed, the most prosperous of men. He was conscious that people noticed them, some with respect, some with envy or irritation or even a hatred open and hot. They were conspicuous. They were Americans. They had been born in a land that had picked this time to erupt its riches, and this accident of birth made them members of the time's aristocracy. His passport was the century's patent of nobility.

They turned into the broad Vaczi Korut, and then into an alley, and there was the *espresso* with its sign in flaked gold on the glass, "Café Molnar." They sat at a table with a top no bigger than a checkerboard, an elaborate steel and silver urn on the counter hissed and spat and produced thick Turkish coffee, and a girl brought them the coffee in tiny cups, along with the cognac. Jeff sipped the

cognac, and then the coffee, and the combination was rich and warming. "It's good," Jeff said. "What do they charge?"

"Just one thing," Todd said.

"One thing?"

"A forint. When they changed from the pengo to the forint everybody called the forints things and I still call them things. You want to keep this place quiet. It's the only place in the whole section where you can get a drink for a reasonable price, and we don't want it overrun by the Dick Tracys."

"The who?"

"The Dick Tracys. You met some of them."

"Oh, I see. What do they do?"

"Oh, they do everything. We've got the MIS, the ONI, the CIC, the FBI, the CID, G-2 from USFA, Central Intelligence Agency, assorted Treasury agents, and our own security people. We're supposed to have more Dick Tracys," Quincy Todd added with some pride, "than any other Mission in Europe. Except, of course, Berlin and Vienna, and you can't count them, really, because they're occupation zones."

"Don't they get in each other's hair?"

"Well, they spy on each other, and they read each other's mail, and they try to scoop each other on hot intelligence, but they don't exactly get in each other's hair. Theoretically, the Admiral coordinates their activities. But they do get in my hair. They use all the transport, and eat all the food, and drink all the Scotch at the Park Club, and every once in a while one of them investigates me. It's the price I pay for the maintenance of democracy and Western civilization."

"The world being what it is," Jeff said, thinking of the Atlantis Project, and wondering whether Todd knew anything of it, "I suppose they're necessary."

"I guess so, but you can't be sure, because nobody knows exactly what they all do, because everything they do is secret."

Todd talked of the routine of the Legation. The Legation had a motor pool and a garage, and on the Kossuth Lajos-tér it main-

tained a mess. The mess was a carry-over from the days, back in 1945, when only a Military Mission had been in Budapest. But with the resumption of diplomatic relations it had been wise and expedient to continue it. "The Admiral," Todd said, "likes everybody to eat at the mess at lunch. The Admiral doesn't want people straying around in restaurants. He likes to keep his finger on things. You can have dinner any place you want, but it's best to turn up at the Park Club some time during the evening, so you can be seen. The Park Club is like a country club without golf. It was a hangout for British and Americans and French before the war and it still is but now it's mostly American. It once was somebody's palace, and it's very lush. The food and liquor are good and we've got a fair band and there's dancing every night. Now about women—"

"Before we start about women," Jeff suggested, "how about telling me about the Admiral? Why an admiral in Budapest anyway?"

"Nobody knows," Todd said. "Maybe it's because the Hungarians are used to admirals. They had Horthy, you know."

"That's not reasonable."

"All I know," Todd said, "is that when I came here we had a general, and then we had a regular Career Minister, and now we have an admiral. Maybe it's because they've got generals everywhere else, and the Navy thought it was being discriminated against, and so they put an admiral in Budapest."

"I never heard of him until I joined the Department."

"Didn't you? Out in the Pacific we heard of him. He had a task force. Lost a carrier and a transport. The Army claimed he screwed things up."

"Then what?"

"Then he was promoted to COMYDDOCSOUWESPAC."

"What's that?"

"Why, that's Commander of Yards and Docks, Southwest Pacific. He fought the battle of Sydney in Prince's and Romano's. Then he became a wheel in Navy Intelligence, and now he's here. He's not a bad guy. Just security-happy."

Todd signaled with his eyes, and the girl brought more cognac.

She had strong legs that were flattered by her brief dirndl, and she weaved between the tables, her body erect but her hips moving as if she danced. She spoke to Todd in a language that Jeff had never heard before, with a few French phrases surprisingly dropping out of the sentences. Todd replied in Hungarian, and the girl said, "Okay, okay," and smiled at Jeff, her teeth vivid white against dark lips, and patted his shoulder.

"What's going on?" Jeff asked. He'd heard tales in Vienna about the Budapest women. But way back in Naples, they'd talked about the women in Rome. When he got to Rome it was the women in Florence, and in Florence it was the women in Milan, and then the women in Vienna. The women were always more beautiful and more eager in the next city.

"She was just asking about you. She wants to know if you're going to be in Budapest long, and whether you'll come here often, and whether you have a woman. I told her you already have a woman."

"As a matter of fact I do have a woman," Jeff said. "At least I think I have."

"If you're not absolutely certain," Todd said, "you'll soon know it in this town." He smiled up at the girl as if they were discussing her beauty. "You've got to be careful about these women in Pest. Now you take Marina, here. She's a dish, all right, but she's a Rumanian gypsy, and if you ever got in the hay with her you'd find yourself involved with her six brothers, three sisters, and maybe her whole tribe. Anyway, she's a social impossibility. Morgan Collingwood would swoon. He'd have you shipped to the Ivory Coast, with a recommendation to file and forget."

"I guess you have the same trouble here," Jeff suggested, "that we had in Vienna. They all want cigarettes and chocolate and CARE packages."

Todd spoke to the girl, and she took away their empty coffee cups. "No," he said then, "that isn't it." He looked down at his glass. "All they want in Pest is a little happiness, and a little kindness. Those have become the rarest luxuries in Eastern Europe."

"I see."

"I don't like to be sentimental about it. You can't be sentimental about women in Budapest. When you find a girl, first be sure she's politically safe, and then be sure she hasn't got syphilis. The Russians used Mongol divisions to take Budapest, and they ran wild. When I got here there were a hundred thousand untreated cases of syphilis in the city. Since then the hospitals have been getting some penicillin, and other drugs, but it's still a definite hazard of course."

"Very interesting, and instructive," Jeff said.

"The safest thing is to find a girl within the Mission. That won't be easy. Girls join the FSS for one of two reasons. Some of them want travel and adventure, and the others think it's a virgin forest for husband hunting. Most of those who want adventure have already been grabbed by the Dick Tracys, and the ones who want to marry have found out by now that there's practically a closed season on Foreign Service Officers."

"Well, I'm not going to let it worry me."

"You're not going to be a dedicated man like your boss, are you?"

"My boss? Who?"

"Fred Keller."

"How do you know he's going to be my boss?"

"My boy, in a Mission like this everybody knows everything. A Legation is a New England village transplanted into the middle of somebody else's country."

"Do you know what my job's going to be?" Jeff asked, in what he hoped appeared innocence.

"I've only a vague idea, except that it must be interesting, because it's been kept so quiet. I thought I was going to get it, and that you were going to have my job. But it looks like I'm stuck forever. Well, that's what I get for learning Hungarian, God damn that Berlitz!"

They left after another drink, and Todd dropped him at his hotel. "I'll have transportation for you at six-thirty," he promised. "Most of our vehicles are jeeps, but I'll pry loose a staff car for you tonight, because you're messing at the Admiral's. When you're finished with it, send the driver back to the motor pool."

3

While he shaved Jeff wondered what it was about Quincy Todd's speech that seemed so familiar, and yet so irritating and strange. It was not until he was on the way out the Andrassy Utca, which slices the city from the river to the suburbs straight as a sword cut, that it came to him. He had been taking stock of the passing traffic, noting that the cars and trucks were shabby as the people. Fenders were rusted out of the lend-lease Studebakers that the Red Army still used, and the Red Army's jeeps were misshapen as if by battle damage. The civilian automobiles looked as if they had been dragged from the back of used car lots. In all of Budapest there seemed nothing new, nothing fresh, nothing gay. And while he had been in Budapest only once before, and then only for a few days, he remembered this of the city—that it had lived and that it had smiled. Now the city had turned down its mouth, and gone into mourning for its past, and the color of its mourning was gray—the gray of unpainted boards and unsanded stone and unsmiling faces, the gray of Russian uniforms and Russian trucks and cars. In the whole length of Andrassy Utca, only the political posters splashed color, and red alone is depressing and monotonous.

Then he realized what it was that was familiar and yet queer about the way Quincy Todd talked. Automobiles weren't automobiles. They were vehicles, or transportation. A garage was a motor pool. He would lunch at a mess. Hell, he thought, it's like being back in the Army.

4

The Admiral lived in the austere Legation residence, standing behind its stately poplars and circular driveway in the embassy section that adjoins the Városliget, the big park that was like Rock Creek Park in Washington. A uniformed doorman bowed him out of the sedan, and a butler took his topcoat and black homburg and said, "You're Mr. Baker, sir? The Admiral is waiting for you in the

library." He led Jeff down a long hallway, deeply carpeted, rich with murals and statuary that reflected the good taste of some former occupant, some peacetime appointee, who had inclination and money to furnish this dwelling so that it might properly advertise the wealth and culture of his country. The manner of his reception, and the grace and grandeur of the hallway, impressed Jeff, so that he experienced a pleasing sensation of excitement, and of being part of something important. Now his rank limited him to a hotel room, or a small apartment, but one day his government might make him master of a residence like this. One day he might *be* the United States of America in a foreign land.

The butler slid open a pair of double doors, Jeff walked through them, and his dreams were scattered by a quarterdeck bellow: "Watch where the hell you're putting your feet!"

Shocked into awkward immobility, he stood like a crane with one foot in the air. He looked down. He had almost stepped on a model battleship. It was one of a fleet that sailed through a narrow channel of leather-bound books across an isthmus of Oriental runner. The Admiral was on his hands and knees in the middle of another fleet on the other side of the room, glaring up at him like an angry bulldog. "All right, Baker, come in," he growled. "Don't stand staring like you never saw me before."

"Yes, sir."

The Admiral sat back and crossed his legs. That morning he had been wearing a tweed suit, but now he was Navy, his uniform coat across the back of a chair. Jeff guessed that he changed into uniform at the end of a day, for comfort, the way some men put on a dressing gown. "I'm working out a problem," the Admiral said. "Want to join me? Move some of these ships around?"

"I'll try," Jeff said, "but I'm afraid I don't know much about it."

"That's all right. I'll tell you what to do. Take that fleet there."

"The one between the books?"

"Yes. The one in the Bosphorus. You've got the American fleet, which is in the Bosphorus, and I've got the Russian fleet, over here in the Black Sea."

Jeff sat down on the floor, cross-legged like the Admiral, wondering what to do next. It occurred to him that some men play with electric trains, and others collect stamps, or ancient automobiles, and some men whittle, and play chess by mail, and do double-crostics, so he should not consider the Admiral childish simply because his hobby was holding maneuvers on the library floor. He picked up a carrier, admiring the workmanship, and said, "This is the *Midway* class, isn't it? It looks just like the *Midway*."

"That's right!" the Admiral congratulated him, appearing pleased and surprised. "These models are exact and scaled. I get them from Schwarz's—you know, the toy store on Fifth Avenue. Now put down the *Midway*, and I'll outline the problem."

The Admiral's voice and manner changed. He was no longer sitting on the floor in a Budapest suburb. He was in a great War Room in Washington hung with wonderful maps of many seas, and he was briefing the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "Gentlemen," he said, "the situation is as follows. Fighting has broken out in Berlin, and it appears inevitable that within forty-eight hours our land forces will be swept from the continent of Europe. But the Navy has used foresight. The Navy has mobilized all available ships in the Atlantic, and dispatched them to The Straits, for we know that the enemy's first thrust will be at Turkey. We have three battleships, six carriers, six cruisers, and suitable escort destroyers in The Straits. In the Black Sea the Reds have six battleships, ten carriers, fifteen cruisers, and an estimated forty submarines. Now the problem is—"

"Where did the Russians get all those battleships and carriers?" Jeff interrupted. "I thought they only had one or two."

"Oh, they've taken over the British fleet. The British are Socialists, aren't they?"

"Yes, but—"

"Quiet! Now the problem is, shall we go into the Black Sea and attack the transports which must now be loading at Burgas, Varna, and Odessa—risking annihilation if the Red fleet is operating as a single force—or shall we retreat to the Mediterranean and accept battle only when we have land-based air cover from North Africa?"

The Admiral stopped speaking and looked inquiringly at Jeff. "Well," he said finally, "what's your decision?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

"I don't know."

"God damn it," said the Admiral. "The alternatives are clear, aren't they? You can take a calculated risk, and try to smash the enemy before he gets started, or you can play it safe. Now, what are you going to do?"

Jeff rested his elbows on his knees, and propped his chin in his hands, and examined the fleets. "I'm the American admiral, right, sir?" he inquired.

"Correct."

"Well, I'm going to get my fleet out from between these books—out of the Bosphorus, I mean—right now, and send them west as fast as they can go, and then I'm going to load about ten atom bombs on B-two-nines and B-three-sixes at our field in North Africa, and then I'm going to blow hell out of the Russian fleet, Burgas, Varna, Odessa, and maybe Belgrade and Moscow too."

"That's not fair!" the Admiral protested.

"Why not? If you can have the British fleet, I guess I can use my atom bombs!"

The Admiral struggled to untwist his legs, found it difficult, and then subsided. "I never use atom bombs in these problems!"

"They're available, aren't they?"

"It spoils the fun," said the Admiral.

He frowned, as if the subject burdened and troubled him. "Don't misunderstand me," he went on. "Atom bombs won't replace navies. Anybody who thinks the atom bomb will replace the Navy is a defeatist. As a matter of fact the atom bomb can only help the Navy. It's not enough to just make atom bombs, you've got to deliver them, and the best way to deliver them is by aircraft carrier. So we're going to have bigger and better and faster carriers, and they're going to be protected by bigger and better battleships, armed with rockets and guided missiles. The Navy always looks ahead. No atom bomb can

stop the Navy. But we don't use atom bombs in these little problems."

So Jeff played according to the Admiral's rules. He sent his fleet into the Black Sea, where it was ambushed by submarines. He got his fleet wiped out. The Admiral did not seem displeased. He said Jeff should come around another evening and try again. The next time Jeff could have the Russian fleet, and he himself would take the American fleet, and they'd see what happened.

5

They had drydocked the warships in a bookcase, and the Admiral was putting on his coat, and remarking that it was about time for dinner, when Fred Keller arrived with another guest. Keller greeted Jeff warmly, and said he had been looking forward to his coming to Budapest, and that they had a big job cut out for them. He introduced Jeff to William Quigley, who said, "We met this morning."

"I'm sorry," Jeff apologized. "I met so many people this morning I didn't place you."

"Perfectly all right. I like people to forget me."

Jeff thought this a queer statement. As they made their way into the dining room he watched Quigley, and decided that if Quigley's ambition was to have people forget him, he'd be successful. Quigley was neither short nor tall, thin nor stout, young nor old. He might have chosen his clothes for protective coloration, for he blended into the background inconspicuous as a quail in autumn leaves.

"Quig is in the Department's Security and Investigation Division," Keller explained, "especially assigned to our project."

"Now, now," the Admiral said. "No talk of the project until after dinner. I never trust a woman or a servant—not even my own. I've had the same Filipino mess boy for twenty years. Never talk in front of him. Never talk in front of anybody."

The dining room table had been designed to seat forty at diplomatic dinners, but a fence of flowers cleverly set aside one end of it. The Admiral and Keller sat at the table's head. Jeff was on the

Admiral's right, opposite Quigley. The Admiral asked Jeff whether he'd seen the big heavyweight fight, and Jeff said yes, on television. The Admiral said television was wonderful, and he wished they had it in Budapest.

Jeff remembered something that the bartender at Harry's New York Bar in Paris had once told him—that when Americans met on foreign soil for the first time, their opening gambit of conversation was invariably prizefighters or women. It was the bartender's conviction that no bar was completely equipped without a copy of the *World Almanac*, to settle disputes about prizefights. It was something that had always stuck in Jeff's head, and generally he found it to be true.

So he talked about the fight.

The Admiral said he thought too many Negroes were winning fight championships.

Jeff felt pretty strongly about this. He said the prize ring was one of the few places where a Negro had an absolutely equal chance. "You never hear of Negro tennis or golf champions," he said, "because they're not allowed to join country clubs."

Keller said, "It's good propaganda to have colored champions. It counteracts the Russian line. When they start talking about our racial frictions, that's one fact the Reds can't get around."

"Well, Fred, there may be something in what you say," the Admiral admitted. "It may be an international asset, but it doesn't do any good at home. Ever since Louis won the title, the niggers have been pushing. Why, they're even giving them commissions in the Navy."

The white-jacketed Filipino brought in an enormous silver platter, with a hill of black caviar rising in its center. This was more caviar than Jeff had ever seen at one time before, and he said so. "It was a present," the Admiral said, "from the Russian Naval Attaché. Genuine Black Sea sturgeon."

"Really!"

"His name is Yassovsky," said the Admiral. "Met him in Washington in forty-four. Very decent fellow. Has a reputation as a

brilliant tactician. That is, with submarines and destroyers. Not really a battleship man. Just sent me the caviar. For no good reason."

"Do you see him often?" Jeff asked.

"See him! Certainly not! I couldn't have him here, any more than he could invite me over to his place. Why, that'd be fraternization, wouldn't it? But he did send me this caviar, and I sent him cigarettes." The Admiral glanced at Quigley, who was listening without expression. "Anyway, I hear he's left the city."

"That's the report," Quigley said.

They ate curry, and a salad, and tiny pancakes swimming in a flaming sauce, and Jeff answered questions on the political situation at home, careful to give the facts without opinion. The Filipino brought coffee, and the Admiral told him, "You can go out now, Juan. Shut the doors and see that they stay shut." Jeff knew that they had reached the hour for business.

6

"I think the time has come," the Admiral began, "to go from the planning to the operational stage of Atlantis Project. So a general review is in order, not only to brief our young newcomer, but as a recap for ourselves. Right?"

"Right, Admiral," Keller agreed.

"Now as you know, I'm simply in charge of policy. With a war coming on I'd rather be on active service, naturally, but the powers that be have decided that I can be useful in this post. I'll admit that this is the most interesting shore assignment a man could want, and what makes it especially interesting is Atlantis Project. Do you know—" the Admiral drummed his forefinger on the table for emphasis—"that this is the first time we have ever really prepared intelligently for a war? We're doing things now that we don't usually do until the shooting has started. Usually, we get caught with our pants down."

The Admiral's voice became round and oratorical, exactly as it

had been when he outlined the battle problem on the library floor. "Europe will be overrun. No doubt about it, and we might as well accept it. Some of our people in Germany and Austria may fight their way to the coast, but at best we can assume an American Dunkirk. Ordinarily I'd say that we ourselves would be captured and interned. Have to accept the fortunes of war, you know. But I have reason to believe—nothing definite, you understand—that key personnel in the Atlantis Project will be flown out when war becomes inevitable. I'm sure that Washington would consider you gentlemen—I won't speak of myself because I'm just an old war horse, and expendable—but you gentlemen will be too important to the war effort to let the Reds get their hands on you. Now our principal objective is the establishment of an organized underground in Europe to work for us after we're gone. Is that correct, Fred?"

"That's perfectly put, Admiral," Keller said.

"Suppose you carry on from there."

"Right." Keller began to talk, quietly as an actor underplaying his part, using his tanned, expressive hands in the most reserved of gestures. Hungary would be vital to the Russians. It would be a staging area and zone of communications for the Red armies moving to the West. He felt sure that the Reds would bivouac the bulk of their armies in the cities of Western Europe, in the hope that we would not drop atom bombs on these cities.

"They know we're soft-hearted," the Admiral interrupted. "They know we don't like to destroy friendly civilian populations."

Keller went on talking, and Jeff realized that he must have been the architect of the project, for he spoke with a salesman's glibness, answering all the objections before they could be presented. "Now I think the Hungarians are generally friendly to us. At this time a Communist government has been imposed upon them, but I think it is fair to say that generally the Hungarians are anti-Communist. They have fought for their freedom for a thousand years, and they will fight again.

"Our aims are fairly obvious. First and most important, we need a constant flow of intelligence and information. We need it on the

strategic level for the efficient conduct of political warfare, and we need it on the tactical level for our military planners. Secondly, our people will lead passive resistance, and be in charge of simple sabotage conducted for morale purposes. They will operate an underground press, and clandestine radio stations. They will keep alive the flame of freedom. Third, when American forces once again invade the Continent, our people will become the nucleus of a resistance army that will attack the Reds in the rear. To achieve our objective we must work with caution and yet with imagination, among those groups which we know will be friendly and receptive to us, and hostile to the Soviet Union."

He turned to Jeff. "What do you think of it?" he asked.

"It's thrilling," Jeff said truthfully. "I feel that I'm watching history being made."

"More than that," Keller said. "You'll make history. You'll become a part of it."

"It frightens me a little."

"Because it is audacious? The Admiral will tell you that no political or military plan—and the two are as one now—can succeed without risk and daring."

"It isn't that," Jeff said, and found he was without words to explain his disquiet. "It is—perhaps that I'm afraid of making a mistake."

"He means the security angles," the Admiral suggested. "And he's quite right. Frightened all of us, at first. Frightened the Secretary himself."

Keller nodded, and now it seemed his words were directed at Quigley. "We are all aware, and must continue to be aware, of the dangers of penetration. The Secretary, as the Admiral says, was worried. If the Russians or the Hungarian Communists knew, or even guessed at, our plans, the results could be catastrophic. They'd slit the throats of our Hungarian friends, and smash our organization before it was born. They'd be alerted on the rest of the Continent. And there's no way of estimating the repercussions at home. It might make the Department look silly. And I don't know what might happen to us."

"I do," said Quigley.

They all looked at him questioningly. It was the first time he had spoken, except to reply to questions. There was a moment of odd, embarrassing silence, while they waited for Quigley to say something more. He looked up at the chandeliers, as if fascinated by the crystal winking in the candlelight, and as if there was nothing more to say.

"I wish you'd quit worrying, Quig," Keller said. "There aren't going to be any leaks, because nobody is going to talk, nothing is to be committed to writing, and our contacts with the Hungarians will be careful, careful, careful. Let's take Baker's assignment, as a model."

"Yes, Fred, let's get on with the job," the Admiral said. "Do you think the Russians worry when they flood our country with spies, and corrupt our labor unions, and spread their poison in our schools and radio and newspapers?"

"Right. We have divided the Hungarians into groups and occupations which per se we can set down as sympathetic and potentially useful. We can assume that what is left of the nobility wants no part of Communism. We can also assume that we will find friends among manufacturers, merchants, bankers, exporters and importers, most of the intellectuals and professional people, and the agrarian landowners. Eventually we will have a man assigned to each of these groups.

"We're going to give the world of the theater to Baker here. The theater is an important part of the life of Budapest, and one through which naturally flows a great deal of information about the Russians. It is an influential medium of propaganda. Furthermore, the Budapest theater is closely linked to the American theater. Hungarian motion picture theaters for many years have been dependent upon the United States for sixty per cent of their films. Many Hungarian actors and actresses have been successful in America. American plays have been popular here. It will be quite natural that an American Third Secretary be seen with the theatrical crowd, either for reasons of business—or pleasure." Keller allowed himself a smile.

"Especially a young, unmarried Third Secretary who knows how to handle himself with the ladies."

"Haw!" the Admiral laughed. "So that's why you picked him!"

Jeff felt uncomfortable, started to deny that he was attractive or a lady-killer, and then saw he would only appear foolish. Instead he said, "It sounds wonderful. But where do I get the money?"

"Atlantis Project has a reasonable amount of unvouchered funds," said Keller. "Now as to your procedure. You will approach what Quig here would call your 'targets' with the view of choosing those best qualified to carry out the aims and objectives I have outlined. You will sound them out most cautiously. You will gradually let them know what they can do to help us—and themselves—when war comes. You will never let them know that you are part of an organization, or that you talk or act for anyone but yourself. You must always give the impression that you are acting without the Legation's knowledge. They won't believe it, but it will allow us to repudiate you if there is a slip. Not until the last stages—when war is inevitable and a matter of days or weeks, will they be given definite assignments, and provided with money, equipment, codes, channels of communications, and definite instructions. Our job at this time is simply to find the completely reliable people who are not only on our side, but who are willing to act as our agents."

"It's going to be a tight little operation," said the Admiral. "A nice, tight little operation. And I want to tell you, Baker, that if we're successful—well, I'm not the kind of a commander who keeps all the glory for himself. There'll be plenty for all of us."

They talked until midnight, and Jeff could not help admiring Keller's capacity for detail. He understood why it was not necessary to risk the project's security by committing any part of it to paper. It was all in Keller's head, always secret, and yet marvelously available.

7

When he left the stars shone cold and blue-white like a handful of diamonds flung against the sky, and the wind blew steadily from

the east and cut through his topcoat, hinting of the gales that would blow out of the steppes in the winter to come. He got into the car, and the driver slid the sedan down the Andrassy Utca. The street lamps were dim, and there were great pools of black between them. There was no other traffic.

They were halfway through the city when a man's scream of terror filled the street. The sedan jerked forward, but Jeff turned in time for one quick look down the side street. He saw two dark figures running, and in the instant that the side street was in his vision, one man leaped upon the other, and brought him to the pavement, precisely as a wild animal drags down his prey.

The car spurted for three blocks and then slowed again. "What the hell was that?" Jeff asked. The driver, his shoulders and neck bent and tense, said something in Hungarian. Jeff tried German.

"The *unbekannte Menschen*," the driver replied without turning his head. "The unknown men, so the papers call them."

"What's that mean?"

"Russian deserters. At this season they stop fools who are out at this hour, and strip them of their clothes. So then they can hide in civilian clothes, and perhaps try to escape to the West. Always the papers call these clothes bandits the *unbekannte Menschen*, because the papers do not dare to mention Russian deserters, but all Pest knows what is meant."

"Are there many of them?"

The driver moved his shoulders. "Who can tell?"

8

Jeff relaxed against the back of the seat, and lit a cigarette, and then lit another for the driver. He discovered that his hands were shaking, and he was glad when they stopped under the marquee lights of the Astoria. He told the driver to return to the motor pool, as Quincy Todd had instructed. He went to the desk, and the night porter gave him his key, and a brown envelope. He turned it over

in his fingers, and saw that all that was written on it was "J. W. Baker" printed with pencil. "Who left this?" Jeff asked.

"I don't know, sir. A man, sir."

"What kind of a man? Someone from the Legation?" Ever since the war's end the Astoria had been used as a transient hotel by Americans, so the hotel people would recognize the Mission's couriers and drivers.

"No. I think a Hungarian, sir."

"Is the elevator running?"

"Oh, no, sir."

Jeff put the envelope in his pocket and walked upstairs, his legs heavy and aching. Their stiffness, he thought, was the result of his deep sleep in the plane the night before. A plane's reclining chairs are comfortable, but you cannot fully stretch out your legs, if the legs are extra long.

In his room he stripped off his clothes impatiently, climbed into his pajamas, and pulled back the covers of his bed. He remembered the letter, swore, and debated whether to fall into bed, or to walk across the room and open it. Then he recalled he had left his cigarettes in his vest, and he would want them on his bed table. He often woke in the night, suddenly, and when he did he always needed a cigarette. So he had to cross the room anyway.

He found his cigarettes, and then ripped open the envelope. Inside was a letter, neatly printed, but some of the letters looked queer, as if written backwards, or backhanded.

"If you are the Captain Jeff W. Baker who was at the Oriente Hotel in Bari," it read, "I would very much like to see you. If you are that Baker please be so kind as to leave a note at the apartment of János Donat, at Lovag Ut. 25, and assign a place of meeting. Any place of meeting will be okay with me but I do not wish to be embarrassment to you."

The letter was signed, "Leonides."

Jeff knew only one Leonides, and he was Leonides Lasenko, a major in the Russian Air Force.

Jeff read the note again, and shoved it under his pillow. He was

too tired to think about it. He snapped out the light, and stretched his body until his feet touched the footboard. He rubbed his head into the pillow and thought how strange it was that the last time he had been in bed it had been Susan Pickett's bed in Washington. He tried to recall it, but he could not imagine how it was, for it was so long, long ago. She was two days and one world away.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1

QUINCY TODD FOUND him an apartment. It was only a room and bath, with its private entrance into the hallway, in Madame Angell's flat on the fourth floor of a reddish stone house on Revay Utca. Madame Angell had been letting out this room to British and Americans since the twilight years after the first World War. Her third husband had been an Englishman, and he had willed her his name and his nationality, which was her distinction and her pride. Madame Angell was an Istanbul-born Greek. Her first husband had been a Turk, her second an Armenian, and her fourth an Austrian, but she considered herself English, and kept a faded blue British passport conspicuous on the parlor table, alongside a photograph of Mr. Angell. While Mr. Angell had been something of a rake, and had never found it expedient or perhaps even possible to return to Britain, as the years passed she magnified his virtues, and made light of his peccadilloes. In that section of Budapest she was known as "the Englishwoman who lives on Revay Utca," and every year, in times of peace, she attended the King's birthday party at the British Embassy. During the war she had let the room to a German economic specialist, but nobody spoke of this now.

Quincy Todd had warned him of all this, and more. The building superintendent, Sandor, who also functioned as elevator operator, was a police spy. But that was to be expected anywhere in Europe. Madame Angell would use Jeff as a sounding board against which

to exercise her favorite among her ten or twelve tongues. Hot water would appear only at sporadic intervals, and heat would be unpredictable. He was not to leave candy in the room, for while Madame Angell was completely honest, she could no more resist chocolate than a drunkard could resist whiskey. And he should not leave whiskey in his room, because Sandor would search the room at least once a week, and Sandor was a drunkard.

However, there were compensations. His rent was six hundred forints a month, which was within his living allowance. The house on Revay Utca was fifteen minutes' walk to the Legation, and less to Keller's establishment. The furniture was comfortable, although old-fashioned. It had a telephone. This was important, since for ten years no new telephones had been installed in Budapest.

And it was a large room with plenty of wall space for his maps. When his friends the maps were on the walls he felt at home.

He discovered that Madame Angell stayed up all night maneuvering the dials of a large and intricate radio. Madame Angell was a propaganda fan. She maintained herself in a narcotic state of tension and excitement by absorbing the whole world's cacophony of violence—threats of war and rumors of war, news of fighting, bombings, assassinations, revolutions, plots, riots, coups, and the verbal marches and counter-marches of the heads of states. For her the end of civilization was something breathlessly postponed from day to day.

She was a soap opera addict on an international scale. For Madame Angell the troubles of Hungary were dwarfed by the monumental crises of greater nations, just as the troubles of the American housewife are dispelled as she is anesthetized by the agonies of Ma Perkins, Stella Dallas, Young Widder Brown, Helen Trent, Our Gal Sunday, Young Doctor Malone, middle-aged Dr. Jordan, the Second Mrs. Burton, and Portia facing life. Once daily her receptacle of disaster overflowed, she had to relay her tidings of impending doom to someone, and when he was at home Jeff was always closest to hand.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1

QUINCY TODD FOUND him an apartment. It was only a room and bath, with its private entrance into the hallway, in Madame Angell's flat on the fourth floor of a reddish stone house on Revay Utca. Madame Angell had been letting out this room to British and Americans since the twilight years after the first World War. Her third husband had been an Englishman, and he had willed her his name and his nationality, which was her distinction and her pride. Madame Angell was an Istanbul-born Greek. Her first husband had been a Turk, her second an Armenian, and her fourth an Austrian, but she considered herself English, and kept a faded blue British passport conspicuous on the parlor table, alongside a photograph of Mr. Angell. While Mr. Angell had been something of a rake, and had never found it expedient or perhaps even possible to return to Britain, as the years passed she magnified his virtues, and made light of his peccadilloes. In that section of Budapest she was known as "the Englishwoman who lives on Revay Utca," and every year, in times of peace, she attended the King's birthday party at the British Embassy. During the war she had let the room to a German economic specialist, but nobody spoke of this now.

Quincy Todd had warned him of all this, and more. The building superintendent, Sandor, who also functioned as elevator operator, was a police spy. But that was to be expected anywhere in Europe. Madame Angell would use Jeff as a sounding board against which

to exercise her favorite among her ten or twelve tongues. Hot water would appear only at sporadic intervals, and heat would be unpredictable. He was not to leave candy in the room, for while Madame Angell was completely honest, she could no more resist chocolate than a drunkard could resist whiskey. And he should not leave whiskey in his room, because Sandor would search the room at least once a week, and Sandor was a drunkard.

However, there were compensations. His rent was six hundred forints a month, which was within his living allowance. The house on Revay Utca was fifteen minutes' walk to the Legation, and less to Keller's establishment. The furniture was comfortable, although old-fashioned. It had a telephone. This was important, since for ten years no new telephones had been installed in Budapest.

And it was a large room with plenty of wall space for his maps. When his friends the maps were on the walls he felt at home.

He discovered that Madame Angell stayed up all night maneuvering the dials of a large and intricate radio. Madame Angell was a propaganda fan. She maintained herself in a narcotic state of tension and excitement by absorbing the whole world's cacophony of violence—threats of war and rumors of war, news of fighting, bombings, assassinations, revolutions, plots, riots, coups, and the verbal marches and counter-marches of the heads of states. For her the end of civilization was something breathlessly postponed from day to day.

She was a soap opera addict on an international scale. For Madame Angell the troubles of Hungary were dwarfed by the monumental crises of greater nations, just as the troubles of the American housewife are dispelled as she is anesthetized by the agonies of Ma Perkins, Stella Dallas, Young Widder Brown, Helen Trent, Our Gal Sunday, Young Doctor Malone, middle-aged Dr. Jordan, the Second Mrs. Burton, and Portia facing life. Once daily her receptacle of disaster overflowed, she had to relay her tidings of impending doom to someone, and when he was at home Jeff was always closest to hand.

He had requisitioned a portable typewriter from the Legation, and each Wednesday and Saturday evening he wrote to Susan, for the diplomatic air pouches closed for personal mail at noon on Thursdays and Sundays. On the Wednesday of his third week in Budapest he was in his room, writing to Susan, when Madame Angell rapped, and jostled her way through his door, carrying a tea tray.

"A little tiffin, Mr. Baker," she said, "but no sugar. It would be nice if you could get some sugar."

"I'll try," Jeff promised reluctantly. He had provided her with five pounds of sugar, magically produced out of the mess by Quincy Todd, only two weeks before.

"Tiffin isn't tiffin without sugar, is it, actually?"

"I suppose not."

Madame Angell fitted herself into the big chair. She was a ponderous and billowy woman, and she must once have been even larger, for the flesh folded loose from her face. She was like a balloon that has been inflated almost to bursting, but from which some air has been allowed to escape, so that the surface is wrinkled and out of shape. "Poor Mr. Baker," she said. "Poor, poor Mr. Baker. I don't wonder that you look worried."

"Do I?" Jeff asked in surprise. He had been worrying, at that. He had not answered Leonides' note, and he could not push Leonides out of his mind. He had been enriched by Leonides' friendship, and now the Russian was calling the loan, and he could not be ignored. Jeff was, frankly, afraid of being seen with a Russian, or in any way becoming entangled with a Russian. Nobody in the Legation ever spoke to a Russian. It had been two years since a Russian had had a drink, or even attended a formal diplomatic dinner, at the Minister's residence or the Park Club. No single thread remained of the strands of mutual purpose that once bound them together as allies. All this

he was writing to Susan. He found that his thoughts and logic clarified as he set them down on paper.

Madame Angell made a clucking sound with her lips, and shook her head. "Poor young man! Your country torn to pieces while you sit here. Who could ever imagine a revolution in America? Fancy!"

"A what!"

"The revolution. Surely you've heard of it?"

"No. Why, that's incredible."

"I've been listening to it all evening. All your southern provinces—the whole southern part of your country—is in revolt. The senators and governors of your southern provinces—or do you call them states?—have called for the overthrow of the President. The details are unclear, but it seems the revolt is led by a southern leader named Jim Crow. All the southern governors and senators have sworn they will uphold him."

"I begin to see," Jeff said.

"The revolt seems to have resulted from something called the Lynch Law. I think an attempt was made to declare this law not in accordance with your Constitution. I am not sure, except that everything is a bloody mess."

"That isn't a revolution," Jeff told her. "That's just politics inside a party. It's as if—" He searched for a simile in the political life of Hungary that would be understandable to her, and found that there weren't any. "Where did you hear this?" he demanded.

"First I heard it from Radio Sofia. I think they quoted a dispatch from Washington by way of Stockholm printed in *Pravda*. It was very plain. There is a revolution in America. My flaming oath!"

"Don't you listen to the 'Voice of America'?" Jeff asked.

"Certainly. I hear New York every night. I hear it between the BBC and Bucharest."

"Well, what did they say about it?"

"Nothing. That's why I know it's true. When I want to discover what's happening in Washington I listen to Moscow, and when I want to find out what's happening in Moscow I listen to New York. Isn't the world in a beastly state!"

"You must think so!" Jeff said.

He finished his tea, and Madame Angell picked up his tray, and then put it down again. "How forgetful of me," she said. "How bloody forgetful." She located a pocket in the folds of her dress and drew out an envelope. "Sandor brought this up as I was bringing the tiffin."

He put the envelope beside his typewriter. He could guess what was in it. "Thanks, Madame Angell."

She kept her eyes on the envelope, as if in hopes that Jeff would open it while she remained there. "Sandor didn't say who brought it, or when. Sandor is a bad type, you know. Sandor may have—"

"I know."

She shrugged her heavy shoulders. "You Americans have grown secret like all the rest. But with the troubles in your homeland, I can hardly blame you. Bloody awful, these revolutions. Now I must listen to Belgrade. Belgrade is always good. Did you know that Tito has his own atomic bomb? God's truth. Heard it on Belgrade last night."

3

Jeff waited until he heard her door close, and then he opened the envelope. The note, this time, was curt.

"You go often to the Espresso Molnar. I beg you to be there tonight. I will wait until midnight."

He re-read the last page of his letter to Susan.

"I met this Russian in Bari," he had written, "at the Fifteenth Air Force Headquarters. We were both there as liaison officers, and we were billeted together in the Hotel Oriente.

"I think I'd better explain a little more about why I was there, and why he was there. After I left the rest camp they didn't send me back to Division, but assigned me to Fifth Army Headquarters in Florence. I was the captain who moved the maps in the briefing tent—about as useful as a magician's assistant. Then, when they were planning the Spring offensive in 1945, they decided to use heavy bombers in tactical support of Fifth Army in the attack on

Bologna. Since I knew the ground fairly well, they sent me to Bari, and we figured out ways for the heavies to identify our forward positions so they wouldn't bomb our own troops. Leonides was in Bari for exactly the same reason, except his job was to protect the Russian army operating on the other side of the Adriatic. I remember now what a devil of a time he had wheedling a bomb line out of his own generals.

"But he did his best, and he was a swell guy. Everybody liked him, and he was the best poker player in the Oriente."

Jeff wondered why he had written to Susan that this Russian was the best poker player in the Oriente, and he guessed it was because there was no way of knowing a man like sitting at a table with him, night after night, and examining his play at poker. From these poker games at the Oriente Jeff could attest to Leonides' character. He could swear that Leonides was intelligent, and a keen student of human nature. He knew he was ordinarily patient, but at times impetuous and daring. Since Leonides did not gloat when he won, or lament overmuch when he lost, Jeff knew he was a gentleman, although he had been born in the slums of Moscow. He knew, further, that Leonides was honest and courageous.

The last paragraph he had written said: "Much as I would like to see him, I don't see how I can risk it. It would be sure to become known, and the Legation would consider me most indiscreet, and perhaps dangerous."

Jeff ran a string of x's through this paragraph, and wrote: "Although I know it is indiscreet, I am going to see him tonight. I just received another note from him. I think he's in trouble and needs my help. Anyway, what the hell, I'm a free American citizen, am I not, and can talk to whoever I choose? Or is that anarchism?"

4

Now that he had made his decision, he was in a hurry to go. He would finish the letter later, or in the morning. He put on his overcoat, stepped into the hallway, and went through the useless gesture

of locking his door. Almost any key would fit it, and he was fairly certain his room had been visited on several occasions while he was absent. He remembered the letter, and swore at himself for his carelessness. He went back into the room, swept the first three pages of the letter off the table, plucked the fourth from the typewriter, folded them and put them in his inside coat pocket.

He rang three times for the elevator, and was about to use the stairs when he heard it grumbling its way upward.

Sandor Patek was fifty, bent and slight, with watery blue eyes and faded yellow hair that curled raggedly at the ends. He had a daughter in St. Louis. When Jeff was in the elevator he usually talked of her. For a year he had received no letters. He wished she would send him CARE packages. She had married a very rich man, and had an automobile and a house with two baths. "You go out this night?" he asked in German, as the elevator descended. "Is not this Wednesday, the night you remain upstairs? Perhaps the note I brought had something to do with it, *nicht wahr?*"

"You are absolutely right," Jeff said. "The note is from a beautiful woman. She needs my help."

"So?" Sandor said, blinking expectantly.

"She was seized by Rajk's secret police and now hangs suspended by her toes from the Franz Josef Bridge. I am on my way to rescue her."

The elevator jerked to a stop, and Sandor opened the door, his face showing anger and shock, as if Jeff had committed a desecration. Rajk was the Communist Minister of the Interior, and therefore Sandor's boss, and his name was not used loosely nor was the secret police ever ridiculed, although it might be hated. Sandor said something nasty in Hungarian, for he knew Jeff did not have the language. All the way to the *espresso* Jeff felt pleased when he recalled Sandor's face. People turned to stare at the tall American in the warm overcoat speeding on long legs past St. Stephen's, chuckling out loud to himself and incongruously wearing no hat.

5

He walked through the door of the Café Molnar and he saw Leonides immediately, for his was the only uniform there. Somehow Jeff had expected that Leonides would be in civilian clothes, and that the clothes probably would be shabby and ill-fitting, and that Leonides would be shielding himself in the darkest corner.

Altogether there were eight tables in the *espresso*, and there were groups of three or four around each one, for while there were few calories in the Molnar's fare, still there was quick warmth, and conversation, and the illusion of Kaffee klatsch relaxation. Only Leonides sat alone. He was at the most conspicuous table, the table closest to the window. His uniform was immaculate, the blouse smooth until it reached the belt, and evenly pleated below. His boots were black and shining, the stiff epaulets on his shoulders soft yellow. He was not so tall as Jeff, but built compactly, and when he rose he gave the impression of endurance and power, like a locomotive that has been still on the track, and then moves slowly ahead.

Thus he rose as Jeff threaded his way towards him, and held out his broad hand, and grinned so that the four steel teeth in the front of his mouth, which he used to display so proudly to the poker players at the Oriente, gleamed silver. "So you old bastard!" Leonides said. "You came! You have not declared war on me."

"Not yet," Jeff said, grasping Leonides' hand in both his hands. He was conscious that his words rang louder than they should. As he seated himself he heard no other sound in the *espresso* except the scrape of his chair. It is the custom, in a Budapest café, for the patrons to be openly and pleasantly curious about those around them. But not as curious as this. Not paralyzed. The *espresso* was hushed as in the emptiness of a Sunday morning. Jeff felt embarrassed, like a man who goes to the theater and is suddenly dragged out on the stage.

Then behind the bar Marina, the gypsy, set the coffee urn to spitting. She looked over at him and winked, and he knew what

she was thinking, that at last something exciting was happening in the *espresso*, and she would soon bring the coffee and cognac, and find out all about it. By threes and fours the heads dropped at the other tables, and the hum and buzz of talk resumed, louder than before. The government clerks, musicians, money brokers, shopkeepers, and printers who frequented the Molnar had something new to talk about. With their own eyes they had seen something astonishing and without precedent. They were in attendance at a miracle.

"You look fine," Jeff said. "You don't look any older. Maybe it's that crew haircut, Kiev style."

Leonides put his elbows on the table, and his fists alongside his mouth so that only Jeff could see his lips, and when he spoke he spoke very softly, and his lips hardly moved. "I am older," he said. "And you are older, also. We are both so old that we will die very soon."

"Cut the drama," Jeff said. "Who's going to kill us?"

"Quietly. Quietly. What I have to say is only for you, not for the Pest rumor factory. You're going to kill me, and I'm going to kill you."

Jeff knew exactly what Leonides meant, and he had hoped they would not speak of this immediately. He had hoped they could bat the breeze about Bari, and perhaps get a little drunk, drunk enough to forget for a time this wall that stood between them. "What did you do after you left Bari?" he said. "You were going back to Moscow and burn your uniform. You were going to fly transport planes on the Moscow-New York run. You were going to marry that girl—what was her name?"

"Vilma. I didn't. She was dead."

"I'm sorry," Jeff said, and raced on from this unpleasantness. "What are you doing in Budapest now, Leonides?"

"Can't you guess?"

Jeff wished he had asked something else. This ordinary question was now as embarrassing and personal as inquiring about a man's religion, or his relations with his wife. "No, I can't guess."

"In this day, what would you do with a Russian who speaks English not badly, who for two years went to Cambridge, and who for another two years was a liaison officer with the Americans?"

"Propaganda?" Jeff ventured.

"Try once more. Remember that no other Russian in Budapest, not even the Marshal, would dare be seen in public with an American."

"In a place like Budapest," Jeff said, "you put him to watching the Americans and British."

"You win the sixty-four dollars," said Leonides. "See, I remember my slang. Yes, my job is to watch the Americans. Not the actual spying, mind you. That is the province of the foreign branch of MVD. I receive all their reports. That is how I knew you were here on the day you came. That is how I know, for instance, that last week you twice visited Zukats, the cinema exhibitor, and that you are more often in the Keller flat than in the Legation. Also I talk to those who know the Americans—the Hungarians, the Rumanians, the Swiss, the Swedes, the Austrians and Germans who are here. I examine all that you have done, and try to analyze why you have done what you have done, and predict what you will do. And once a week, or twice a week, I write a report for the Marshal of what is in the soul of the scheming Americans."

Jeff started to rise. "I don't like to have my soul examined. I'm sorry, Leonides."

The Russian put his hand on Jeff's arm. "Wait, dope. Wait for what I have to say. When your enemy watches you there is little to fear. When your own countrymen spy on you, then you are lost. That has been the curse of my country. Okhrana, Cheka, OGPU, NKVD, and now MVD—they are all alike. They suck the milk from my Russia, and fill her breasts with poison!"

Jeff sat very still. He knew now why Leonides had hunted him out, and the urgency of the summons. He knew even why he himself was here. "When I got your note tonight," he said, "I thought you needed help. I thought you'd become one of the *unbekannte Menschen* and needed clothes or money to run the border."

"I am one of the unknown men," Leonides whispered—for his quick eye had noted the girl coming with Jeff's cognac and coffee—"except that I am still in my uniform. There are many of us—many more than you think. There is even one close to Him. But we will talk of all this later."

Marina set the drinks down, and said, "Okay? Okay. See, I learn English."

"Who's the lucky teacher?" Jeff said. Her arms were bare and smooth and brown, and her vitality reminded him of Susan, and he wondered how long it would be before he had another woman, and what this would mean between him and Susan. She would understand, Susan would, that he could not be a monk for three years. She would ask him nothing, and he would tell her nothing, and his human and inevitable need would not stand between them.

The girl didn't answer him, but undammed a stream of Rumanian at Leonides, and the Russian rocked his head back and laughed with his mouth wide, so that everybody at the other tables looked. "I speak all the wrong languages," Jeff complained.

"She says," said Leonides, "that ordinarily she does not like Russians, because gypsies are individualists and Russians are sheep. She says she likes me better than any Russian she has ever seen, because obviously I too am an individualist. She also says for us to enjoy ourselves, because we will both be exiled in the morning, me to Siberia, and you to Alcatraz."

"Alcatraz? What's she know about Alcatraz?"

"They think it's the American political prison. There was an article about it in today's *Szabad Nep*."

Marina had been listening, but not understanding. "I learn English more. Okay," she said. Leonides patted her round bottom, and she whirled away, observant still over her shoulder, sure that Leonides still watched her.

6

"What was it we used to say at the Oriente?" said Leonides. "Stacked. Yes, really stacked. With such beautiful creatures in the world, why is it we must think of war?"

"So you're sure there'll be a war?"

Leonides traced squares in the moisture on the table. He frowned as he talked. "Yes. We are like two ships on a collision course with blind men stiff in fear at the wheel. Not only will there be a war, but I think I can tell you how it will start, and the course it will run, and how it will end.

"You will attack us. Your memory of Pearl Harbor will always be fresh and raw and you will not again risk surprise. You will attack us at that moment when your President believes we have the atomic weapon, and are ready to attack you. Your President will make this awful decision alone, without the customary reference to your Congress, because it will be a military necessity that he do so.

"He will have no choice. The pressures will be too great. Your Central Intelligence Agency will know when we have a stockpile of atomic bombs. Already he must have been informed of our progress in bacteriological warfare, in which we are perhaps farther advanced than you. Your reconnaissance will unmask our airfields. Your FBI will have penetrated our plots within your own homeland. Our actions in Germany and Austria and Manchuria and Korea and Greece will become intolerable to your Army. Our overt acts in the Mideast will frighten your Navy, which might starve without the Mideast oil, and the admirals too will clamor for war. And in that moment when he is certain your country faces another Pearl Harbor, then he will order the attack. He must."

Jeff drank his cognac in a gulp. "Go on," he said.

"In the first day your Air Force will destroy all our important centers. You will turn into radioactive powder Voroshilovgrad, Magnitogorsk, Gorki, Leningrad, Stalingrad, Odessa, Dnepro-

"I am one of the unknown men," Leonides whispered—for his quick eye had noted the girl coming with Jeff's cognac and coffee—"except that I am still in my uniform. There are many of us—many more than you think. There is even one close to Him. But we will talk of all this later."

Marina set the drinks down, and said, "Okay? Okay. See, I learn English."

"Who's the lucky teacher?" Jeff said. Her arms were bare and smooth and brown, and her vitality reminded him of Susan, and he wondered how long it would be before he had another woman, and what this would mean between him and Susan. She would understand, Susan would, that he could not be a monk for three years. She would ask him nothing, and he would tell her nothing, and his human and inevitable need would not stand between them.

The girl didn't answer him, but undammed a stream of Rumanian at Leonides, and the Russian rocked his head back and laughed with his mouth wide, so that everybody at the other tables looked. "I speak all the wrong languages," Jeff complained.

"She says," said Leonides, "that ordinarily she does not like Russians, because gypsies are individualists and Russians are sheep. She says she likes me better than any Russian she has ever seen, because obviously I too am an individualist. She also says for us to enjoy ourselves, because we will both be exiled in the morning, me to Siberia, and you to Alcatraz."

"Alcatraz? What's she know about Alcatraz?"

"They think it's the American political prison. There was an article about it in today's *Szabad Nep*."

Marina had been listening, but not understanding. "I learn English more. Okay," she said. Leonides patted her round bottom, and she whirled away, observant still over her shoulder, sure that Leonides still watched her.

6

"What was it we used to say at the Oriente?" said Leonides. "Stacked. Yes, really stacked. With such beautiful creatures in the world, why is it we must think of war?"

"So you're sure there'll be a war?"

Leonides traced squares in the moisture on the table. He frowned as he talked. "Yes. We are like two ships on a collision course with blind men stiff in fear at the wheel. Not only will there be a war, but I think I can tell you how it will start, and the course it will run, and how it will end.

"You will attack us. Your memory of Pearl Harbor will always be fresh and raw and you will not again risk surprise. You will attack us at that moment when your President believes we have the atomic weapon, and are ready to attack you. Your President will make this awful decision alone, without the customary reference to your Congress, because it will be a military necessity that he do so.

"He will have no choice. The pressures will be too great. Your Central Intelligence Agency will know when we have a stockpile of atomic bombs. Already he must have been informed of our progress in bacteriological warfare, in which we are perhaps farther advanced than you. Your reconnaissance will unmask our airfields. Your FBI will have penetrated our plots within your own homeland. Our actions in Germany and Austria and Manchuria and Korea and Greece will become intolerable to your Army. Our overt acts in the Mideast will frighten your Navy, which might starve without the Mideast oil, and the admirals too will clamor for war. And in that moment when he is certain your country faces another Pearl Harbor, then he will order the attack. He must."

Jeff drank his cognac in a gulp. "Go on," he said.

"In the first day your Air Force will destroy all our important centers. You will turn into radioactive powder Voroshilovgrad, Magnitogorsk, Gorki, Leningrad, Stalingrad, Odessa, Dnepro-

petrovsk, of course Moscow, and the new uranium cities beyond the Urals. How many millions you will kill I cannot estimate, nor will the number you kill affect the course of the war."

Jeff interrupted. "No, because by then you will have your armies in the cities of Western Europe, and you will drive the Western armies into the sea."

"Only in the beginning," Leonides said. "Later you will land on the Continent, and your armies will defeat the Soviet armies just as they did the Germans, and for the same reason. You will have overwhelming production and fire power and air power. Most of the Soviet armies will be destroyed, and what remains will retreat inside Russia."

"Then the war will be over," Jeff said.

"Oh, no," said Leonides. "That will be only the second phase. The third phase will come when you occupy most of Russia, and all of Europe. I should think it will take ten or twelve million men. Any general will tell you that victory is only achieved after you have occupied and pacified the enemy country. It will be extremely difficult and perhaps impossible. There will be interminable guerrilla warfare."

"And then we will have won the war," Jeff said.

"No, you will not have won. You will simply have performed a Russian tragedy. You will, out of fear for your own life, have committed murder and then suicide."

"I don't understand."

"Naturally, you will be under a military dictatorship. With so many ideological traitors, and Soviet agents, in your country you could not successfully conduct a war without such a dictatorship. Your jails will be bursting, and all your freedoms vanished. You will drain your natural resources to win this victory, and the drain will never end, for always there will be your millions of soldiers outside your borders, straining to maintain the victory and restore order. All of Europe and some of Asia will be in such ruins and chaos that it would be better to let it again join the jungle. But you will not be able to do this, because people will still live there, and they will

all hate you. And eventually you will crack and break up, and your suicide will be complete."

Jeff signaled Marina to bring him another drink. "All of what you say may be true, Leonides," he said, "but there is one thing worse than winning a war, and that is losing it."

"That is true," said Leonides, "but there is not much difference in the end. The truth is, nobody ever again will win a war."

Marina came with Jeff's drink, and he swallowed it quickly, as he had the other, and it did not sting or warm him, but seemed innocuous as water. "Sounds silly, doesn't it?" he said.

"It is truly silly, but there it is, each day closer."

"And you have no hope?"

"I do have hope. If I had no hope I would leave here this minute and throw myself into the Danube." Leonides looked at Marina, and smiled at her, and she saw from his smile that what he had to say was serious and private and not her concern. She touched his shoulder and went back behind the bar.

"There is a saying here in Budapest," he went on, "that like many other Budapest sayings is funny and yet true. It is, 'The Dictator made two mistakes. He showed the Red Army to Europe, and he showed Europe to the Red Army.'"

Jeff laughed aloud, throwing his head back as the Russian had, and the others at the tables around smiled in understanding. Surely the Russian and the American were now telling each other bawdy jokes. Their friends would not believe it, when they had told what they had seen.

"As I say, it is true," Leonides continued. "It is the reason for all our desertions. Our soldiers have seen with their own eyes, and they know He has lied to them. What has been seen cannot be driven out of the mind or changed, like that which has been read, or only heard. They know that even in this beaten and cringing country the people live better than in Russia. They have more opportunity, more freedom. They have more things, like bathtubs and toilets and electric stoves. They are happier. Some can laugh. Do you know what it means not to be able to laugh, for fear that the MVD may see you

laughing, and suspect you laugh at Him? In Moscow one smiles only for the camera."

"Go ahead," Jeff urged.

"Most important, in many places, such as Berlin and Vienna, the Red Army has been in contact with the American Army, and they have seen what the American Army has—what material and what privileges—and it is not believable. For my part, the happiest days of my life I spent in Bari. I think I know America, and Americans, and I like them and will do, am doing, my best not to war on them. There are many others like me, who know the West. There is even one high in our government, who is our leader.

"And we have talked with each other, and we are moving. Not quickly, for it would be swiftly fatal. We are the Second Russian Revolution." He reached out his wrestler-strong hand and gripped Jeff's arm. "Did you hear that, Jeff—the Second Russian Revolution!"

"I heard," Jeff said. The limitless possibilities opened before his mind. "I didn't think it was possible, but now I see I was foolish. We didn't think there was opposition against Hitler, either. But there was, and they very nearly killed Hitler."

"We will most certainly kill *Him*," Leonides said. "We will kill *Him*, and the other sour and crazy ones, and in Russia we will have a new government and a new country and there will be peace."

"Christ, I hope so," Jeff said. He must be composed. He must listen carefully.

"I pray so," said Leonides. "I pray so. We can do it alone, but with your help it will be quicker. Perhaps without your help, it would not be quick enough. It is difficult for us to approach you. We tried before. Yassovsky, who was Naval Attaché, sent a present of caviar to your Minister-Admiral. He knew him well in Washington. What happened? The Minister-Admiral sent Yassovsky cigarettes, but no word. I don't understand it. It was a direct invitation. Or perhaps, as you fellows would tell me when we played poker, I have an Oriental mind."

"I understand, I'm afraid," Jeff said. "Yassovsky has gone?"

"He was recalled to Moscow. I don't know why. It worries me, and the others of us. Now there is no possible link between us, and you, except you, Jeff."

Jeff hesitated for the part of a second, the beat of a heart. "What do you want me to do?" When the question was out he knew he had turned his future into a path he had never expected nor intended. Once before he had made such a decision. It was like the day he had found the height commanding Futa Pass lightly held. He had moved his platoon up the height, without flanks, orders, communication, supplies, or the support of artillery. Up to this moment, it had been the most momentous, and really the only decision of his life.

"At this time," said Leonides, "you do nothing. We have many plans. We will need much help. There is, for instance, the matter of the radio station. It is progressing well, but we may need help. We will have a newspaper. Where can it be published? Pamphlets and leaflets. What press will print them? Money we will need, of course, and eventually perhaps air transport, explosives, arms."

Jeff choked back the questions he wanted to ask. Who was the leader? How many were they? How soon would they act? In time, he was sure, Leonides would tell him what he needed to know. "Leonides," he said, "you know my position. You know that I am only a Third Secretary, without influence or power or the right to make decisions or commit my government. Whatever you want, I will have to take to somebody higher up. You know this?"

"Of course. All I want now is the assurance that at the proper time you will transmit the news of what we are, and what we intend, and what we need."

7

"Sure," Jeff agreed. He balanced his chair back on two legs, and then let them bang to the floor. Quincy Todd had come through the door of the Café Molnar. It had been Jeff's understanding that Todd came to the *espresso* only during the daylight hours. But here

he was, four steps away, pulling off his overcoat, peering through the tobacco smoke and uncertain light, seeking someone. "Hey, Quincy," Jeff yelled. The best defense was always an attack.

Todd turned, smiling automatically, moved towards their table, and then froze like a man in the woods who had almost stepped on a snake. He had seen the Russian.

"Come on over," Jeff urged.

"Just poked my head in to look," Todd said. "I have to leave right away. Thanks all the same." He glanced back towards the door, as if in fear his retreat would be cut off.

"Sure you won't have a drink?" Jeff asked. "Come on, pull up a chair."

"Sorry. Have to go," Todd said, and fled, his coat under his arm.

As he went out of the door from behind the bar Marina called, "Quin-see." But he was gone.

"Well, I'll be damned," Jeff said.

"This will get you into trouble?" Leonides suggested.

"I don't think so," Jeff said. "He's a good guy. I honestly don't see why it should get me into trouble. I'll just explain that I met you in Italy, and bumped into you here. That's reasonable, isn't it?"

"Yes, you'll be all right," Leonides decided. "You'll be able to—what do you say—swing it. I know you Americans. You are different."

They talked of how they should meet in the future. Jeff could always send a note to the house on Lovag Utca. "The apartment," Leonides explained, "is what is known as a letterbox. It is occupied by a Hungarian named János Donat. Whatever is left with him will reach me. But you should not go there yourself, except in exceptional emergency, for if an American were seen entering the apartment Donat might be compromised. On my part, I can always leave a message at your apartment."

"The Hungarian superintendent," Jeff warned, "is a Rajk spy."

"I know," said Leonides, "but so is the Hungarian who carries our messages."

"There is one more thing," Jeff said. "Can I communicate what

you have told me to someone else, in case anything should happen to me—a transfer or anything?”

“I have placed my life in your hands,” Leonides said simply, but in a tone that was almost a rebuke. “Not only my life, but many others’.”

“I’m aware of it.”

“It is true that it would be better if one other besides yourself should know what I have told you, and yet I am hesitant to give my sanction that it pass beyond you.” Leonides looked down at the table, and Jeff knew that he was looking into the days to come, and estimating the possibilities. “If you have a friend in your government whose insides you know, who perhaps you have known all your life, whose lips cannot be opened by any means, then I agree. I say yes.”

“You are very careful,” Jeff observed.

“Your Department of State,” said Leonides, “is not secure.”

CHAPTER EIGHT

1

IN THE MORNING Jeff awoke thinking. When he awoke and wished himself asleep again it was because the day loomed dreary or unpleasant. But if he awoke thinking then the day invited progress and excitement. It was a good sign.

He showered and shaved and when he stepped out of the bathroom there was a pot of scalding water on his table, insulated by Madame Angell's tea cozy. He mixed his powdered coffee, and reminded himself that he must wheedle more sugar out of Quincy Todd. He wasn't happy in the morning without his coffee, with plenty of sugar, but no cream. He set the cup alongside his typewriter, and concluded his letter to Susan.

"Thursday A.M.," he wrote. "I saw Leonides. He looked fine." This sounded inane, but how much more could he dare tell her, or anyone, except the one person in whom he eventually must confide? "He is still in uniform. He is attached to the headquarters of the Soviet lines-of-communication troops here. Things being as they are, I don't expect I'll be seeing much more of him.

"Susan, I desperately wish you were here. Not only because I want you desperately, but because there is so much we would have to talk about. I want to share my life with you. I suppose that sounds corny, but that's what I feel inside me. It doesn't seem possible that I am homesick, because in the years in Italy and Austria I was never homesick. And my job here is much more interesting

than anything I have ever done before. For the first time in my life I feel that I have the opportunity to do something that is really important—important to you, Susan. It must be that I'm just plain lonely, and that I need you. I'm getting your air mail letters in three days now. Write me often, for I love you, Susan."

It sounded stilted and incomplete, but it was the best he could do. He could not tell her of the cabal of which Leonides was a part. He trusted her, certainly, but he was afraid that if it became necessary for her to transmit Leonides' story to the Department, the story would not be credited. She was, after all, only the girl who took the nine o'clock conference. She was a very attractive and reliable recording machine. He could imagine the reaction if Susan approached, say, the Undersecretary of State, and remarked: "I got a letter from my boy friend in Budapest. He knows something of an internal plot to overthrow the Soviet regime, and he would like me to tell you about it."

When he shared Leonides' secret with someone it must be a person with access to the Department's higher levels, and probably with access to the Secretary himself. He doubted whether anyone except the Secretary would have the power or authority or the nerve to act in the matter. He knew that the hope on which the Department based all its policy was that the Soviet regime would change. Whether the Department would actively encourage a revolt against the regime, or whether the Department preferred to wait until the dictator died, in the belief that a more reasonable leader would replace him, he did not know. Nobody knew, except the Secretary. Perhaps even the Secretary, never having been faced with the alternatives, himself did not know. In any case, this was not a matter to be risked in the mails. If Atlantis Project was too secret to put on paper, then so was this, except in utter emergency and necessity.

He signed his name to the last sheet of the letter, and was typing the address on the envelope when there was a knock on his door. He hoped it was Quincy Todd. He would like to explain last night to Quincy, so he would not suspect Jeff of traffic with the Russians,

and tattle to Morgan Collingwood. He didn't think Todd would do this. Todd would talk to him first. "Come in," Jeff called.

2

It wasn't Todd. It was a moment before Jeff realized it was Quigley. He had bumped into Quigley several times since his first night at the Legation residence, but Quigley was a man whose face always seemed like the face of someone else. Now for the first time Jeff was conscious that Quigley wore rimless glasses, and that the eyes behind them, although of no identifiable color, were hard like freshly cast metal.

"Is this room secure?" Quigley inquired.

"I don't know. Maybe there's a red-headed Russian under the bed. Why don't you look?"

"Don't be funny, Mr. Baker. You're in no position to be funny."

When he had last seen Quigley, at the mess, Quigley had called him by his first name. Now Quigley was calling him "Mr. Baker." That wasn't good.

"I see you were writing a long letter," Quigley said. "Do you mind if I look at it?"

"You're damned right I mind!" Jeff came out of his chair and put himself in front of the security officer. Quigley was a small man. The top of his hat came level with Jeff's eyes. He was not young, and he looked as if he had been absorbing his vitamins in capsule form for years, with no visible beneficial effect. He was just a little man in a trench coat and a pork pie hat who didn't move or blink or frown or in any way show that Jeff impressed him. He said, "I must insist."

"Do you *like* to read other people's mail?" Jeff asked.

"As a matter of fact, I do. It's the most fascinating part of my work."

"Well, you're not going to read mine."

"Yes I am," Quigley said quietly. "You see, Mr. Baker, you've committed a really astonishing breach of security. I've been in this

business for a long time, Mr. Baker, and I've never heard of anything more brazen, and I might say stupid. For this day and time, Mr. Baker. For this day and time. You spent three hours last night with one of the most dangerous Russians in Pest. A clever intelligence officer. His assignment is to learn about the Americans, in case you don't know it. You have been entrusted with the most sensitive, and highly classified, information in this Mission. You drink with this Russian for three hours, and the next morning you write a long letter. I think you will agree that I must require a complete statement. And I must see this letter."

Suddenly Jeff felt awkward and out of place. He picked the letter from the desk, handed it to Quigley, and said, "Here it is. Hope you get a bang out of it."

"Do you mind if I sit down?" Quigley said. He took off his coat, laid it carefully across the foot of the couch, and dropped his hat on top of it. Then he found a chair, and moved it so the morning light would fall over his shoulder. He sat down, and read the letter, as methodically as if it were a new Department directive. Jeff could not sit down. He locked his hands behind his back, and took stiff paces in front of Quigley's chair. He was choking with scorn, indignation, and loathing. He was sure Quigley must feel his contempt, but if Quigley felt it, he didn't seem disturbed.

Quigley finished the letter. "Well, Mr. Baker, I think that explains everything very well. It doesn't seem to be so serious as I had imagined."

"You mean I'm not going to be hung, or boiled in oil?"

"This is still not funny, Mr. Baker. If the Admiral hears about it, he may want you flogged, keel-hauled and thrown into irons." The very smallest, most elusive bit of humor touched the corners of Quigley's mouth. It could not be said that Quigley smiled. It was simply that his face exposed an emotion. He rose, dropped the letter on the desk, and peered at the address on the envelope. "Susan Pickett, Bay State Apartments," he repeated. "Fine girl. Colonel Pickett's widow. Keeps her mouth closed."

"Do you know her?"

"No. I know of her. I know of almost everyone in the Department."

"I can see where you would," Jeff observed.

Quigley didn't appear offended. He looked around the room, and said, "Do you mind if I make a little inspection? I'm never happy in a room unless I know what's in it."

"Go right ahead. Make yourself at home," Jeff told him. "If you get bored, why there are some fresh personal letters, just arrived from Stateside, in the right-hand top drawer of the chiffonier."

"Thanks very much. I assume you have sense enough not to leave them in your room if they contain classified material." Jeff began to understand that Quigley could never be offended, or insulted. Quigley made a quick circle of the room, examining light sockets, the telephone box, peeping behind the radiator, testing the walls, sniffing with distaste at the locked door that once had made the room part of Madame Angell's flat. When he finished he said, "I suppose it is all right, but of course anyone could put a wire recorder on the other side of that door, and pick up everything that goes on in here."

"Do you think anybody would bother?"

"People do. In this day and time, Mr. Baker. In this day and time. If people minded their own business, Mr. Baker, I'd be out of a job."

Jeff found, to his surprise, that his indignation had burned out, and had been replaced by curiosity. "Tell me," he said. "How did you know I met Major Lasenko in the *espresso* last night? Did Todd tell you?"

"No. Was Todd there?"

"He just poked his head in, saw the Russian, and then vanished as if we were carrying the plague."

"A very sensible man," Quigley said. "From now on, that should be a good example for you."

"Well, how did you know I was with Lasenko?" Jeff persisted.

Quigley sat down, placed a hand on each knee, and said, "Mr. Baker, I am a professional. There are some so-called security officers here—the ones whom Quincy Todd calls 'Dick Tracys'—who are

not professionals. They are not fit to wear a Junior G-Man badge. They may once have been Alcohol Tax Unit agents, chasing bootleggers, or prison keys, or divorce snoops, or third-grade detectives in fourth-rate police departments. When war came they got themselves jobs in intelligence, or security, and now they have found a new bandwagon. They have discovered that it pays to be mysterious. They get a nice salary, and all-expense tours to Europe and Asia and South America, and unvouchered cash in large lumps, and neither the Congress nor Internal Revenue dare ask where the money goes because they are all chasing the Reds and anyone who questions them is meddling with national security and is probably a Red himself, or anyway a fellow traveler. They are wrecking my profession. I have been in the Department for thirty years, first as a courier and later as a security officer. Because I am a professional I know most of what goes on, and because I am a professional I cannot tell you how I know, because it might compromise my sources."

"I see," Jeff said. "Thirty years in the Department! I wonder if you knew my father?"

"Baker? Baker? The only Baker I knew was Nicholas Baker. He was an important man in the European Division."

"My father's name was Nicholas Baker, and he was in the European Division, but he was a clerk."

"So you're Nick Baker's son. I knew him very well. He was a friend of mine." Jeff noticed another subtle change in Quigley, hardly a change in expression, perhaps only a change in the cadence of his words. "And he was important. I'm sure that on occasion his influence directed policy. In those days the little, unknown men like your father insured the continuity of our policy. The Foreign Service Officers could take their weekends in New York, or Long Island, and their fortnights in Florida, or Bermuda or the Maine woods. But men like your father had to be at their desks every day, nine to six, and requests for policy from the Missions cannot wait. The Department is too big for that now, and the work too special-

ized. The little man can see only the smallest fragment of the whole. He should attend to his own job. I do. You should, too, Jeff."

"I am. I am doing the very best I know how."

"I'm sure you are. I'm sure Nick would be proud of you. You know, Jeff, Nick talked about you a great deal. We used to play cribbage together, some evenings after work, down in the tunnel that led to the White House from Treasury and he would talk about you. Now I think I'd better go. I'm going back to the Legation. May I suggest, Jeff, that you approach Quincy Todd, and ask him not to mention last night. I'd rather not have the Admiral know about it. The Admiral is sometimes hard to handle."

"I will," Jeff promised. "Do you mind taking this letter to the mail room, so it makes the pouch?"

"Not at all."

Jeff sealed the letter, and handed it to him, and said, "Thanks, Quig. Thanks very much." When Quigley was gone he flopped down on the bed and for a long time lay on his back without moving, staring up at the stains on the ceiling.

3

When at last he shook himself off the bed he knew something that he had not known before. The career for which he had prepared no longer existed, for him or anyone. The art of diplomacy, like many other things, lay buried in the radioactive dust of Hiroshima. Within Hiroshima itself there might be, within a few generations, mutations of the body. They would be shocking and ugly, but not dangerous. There had been more immediate mutations in the mind of man. His lobe of fear had abnormally grown, his confidence in a better future had disintegrated, his instinct for brotherhood and kindness was vestigial, his memory of the Sermon on the Mount was somewhere gone.

Even the character of the Department of State had changed. The Department had become a two-headed monster, and the head with a tongue was an instrument of psychological and political warfare.

It spoke of its power, its goodness, its planes, its ships, its bombs, and the weakness, the badness, the cruelty, and the totalitarianism of the enemy. The other head could only think, and dream—dream of the United Nations, and UNESCO, and world federation, dream of things that could have been, but which—like the Sermon on the Mount—were not practical.

He understood the way of it. There was the bomb, and there was this cold war. There was a saying: "When war begins, diplomacy ends," and the United States was at war. It was wrong to call it a cold war, as if it moved with a glacier's deliberation, or were safely encased in the freezing compartment. It was a war hot and consuming and dreadfully wasteful, a war fully munitioned with passion and hatred. Matson had been right. He had come here as a soldier. Once again he was a platoon leader out on the point, and he didn't like it any better than he had liked it before. Yet he would do his job, because it was in his spirit that he have pride in work well done, just as in the Army he had taken pride in Company, and Battalion, and Regiment, and Division, and later in the importance of his liaison between Ground and Air.

4

He missed Quincy Todd at the luncheon mess in the pension off Kossuth Lajos-tér, but he found him that night in the Park Club. The Park Club was at Stefánia Utca 34, not far from the Minister's residence, and the homes of Morgan Collingwood and others in the Legation. In the day of that economic cornucopia and political monstrosity, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the cavalry of Franz Josef, plumes flying and breast plates gleaming in the sun, paraded this leafy avenue on Sunday afternoons and national holidays. In those days it had been the practice of the Hungarian aristocrats and foreign diplomats resident in Pest to step out upon the terraces of the Park Club—then an international casino—and admire the lancers and hussars.

Now the cavalry and the age had passed, but the Park Club itself

miraculously had little changed, although there had been a remarkable shift in the nationality of its patrons. It was a social outpost of the West. Beyond the Park Club lay the East, and barbaric customs.

The Hungarian hosts were now far outnumbered by their guests, and the guests footed all the bills. The club was off limits, by mutual taboo, to Russians, Bulgarians, Czechs, Rumanians, Jugoslavs, and Poles, except those satellite nationals in disfavor with their Communist governments at home. These refugees were not seen often at the Park Club. One way or another, they vanished from Budapest, for them a perilous way station on the westward road. Most of the members were American and British, and there followed, in the order of their influence in the Western alliance, the French, Dutch, Belgians, Swedes, and Swiss. The Italians were split. The ones with titles preferred the Park Club, the others found their amusement elsewhere. The Hungarian aristocracy, and those business and theatrical luminaries who were socially acceptable, enjoyed the club's excellent cuisine and liquors, its dances and privately imported American films, whenever possible—providing they were already compromised by contact with the West, or in bravery or imprudence dared ignore the Communist displeasure.

Jeff found Quincy Todd in the cocktail lounge. George Fejer, the club's pianist, was rippling out "Civilization," and singing what he thought were the words. Fejer had a miraculous ear, and he could pirate a hit tune off American short wave, but sometimes the words escaped him and he made up other words which did just as well. Quincy Todd was dancing with Marge Collins, who was in cryptography, but they were entranced with Fejer's fingers and their feet were barely moving. Then Quincy Todd saw Jeff, and winked, and said above the music, "Oh, what you did!"

"I'm at Fred Keller's table. Come on over." Jeff saw the Collins girl's lips move, and saw Quincy shake his head, no, and continue shaking it, and so Jeff knew Quincy hadn't talked about the Russian.

He made his way across the dance floor, and Keller was at a table

against the wall. "Come on over," he called to Jeff. "I've got someone here wants to meet you."

The someone must be the girl with Keller. "I'm on my way," Jeff said. She was the most striking woman he had ever seen. She seemed to illuminate the side of the room. It was apparent what kind of a body she possessed, for her silver lamé gown, which could only have originated in Paris, was slashed to the waist in unnerving angles. It was not her body which captured Jeff, but her face. "This is Rikki Telredy," Keller said. He held out his hand as a horticulturist might bring attention to a unique camellia. "Isn't she lovely? Rikki—Jeff Baker, one of my colleagues."

"Oh, I've heard of you," Jeff said, seating himself. "You dance at the Arizona."

"She is *the* dancer at the Arizona," Keller said. "I told Rikki last night that you were interested in the exchange of talent, and other cultural matters, between Hungary and America, and Rikki said she hoped you'd be here tonight, and here you are. I think you two will find a great deal to talk about together."

"I'm sure of it," Jeff said. Fred was bird-dogging a target for him. Fred was telling him that Rikki was a prospect for Atlantis Project. Fred was certainly generous with his women. He must be, as Quincy Todd had said, a dedicated man.

Then the piano's artistry ended, and a waiter brought fresh drinks, and Quincy and Marge came back to the table, and Quincy said, "Later."

"They've got secrets," said Marge Collins. "Those two have secrets together."

Quincy laughed and said, "Yes, we've got secrets—both of us."

Keller told the classic tale about the American correspondent who was pushed around by a Russian general, and his awful revenge. He cabled home reports that the Russian general—who actually was no more cooperative than any other Russian general, and less than most—was chummy with his Anglo-American opposite numbers on the Allied Control Council. The story was seen by the Russian Embassy in Washington, relayed back to Moscow, and the Russian

was recalled, and presumably sent to Siberia. Jeff didn't listen. He had heard the yarn before, and anyway he was watching Rikki.

She was, he supposed, the perfect Magyar type, and in Hungary are born some of the most beautiful women in the world. The soft glow of the room fired her coppery hair with many tiny lights. Her cheek bones were wide and prominent, her face triangular, her skin golden as if she had carefully rationed her hours in the California sun, and yet there was no sun in Budapest at this season. Her nose was straight, and her nostrils so mobile that their movement changed her expression. Her full lips were never quite shut, so that she always appeared expectant. Her eyes were dark, and long and slanted. Jeff knew he was looking at a product of four thousand years of invasion and conquest, in which many armies and many races had rolled across the Danube at this gate to the West. In her he could see the Tartars, and the Mongol hordes of Genghis Khan; the Turk storming up the Balkan peninsula in a tide that ended only at the gates of Vienna; a trace of Byzantium, and a trace of Judea; Arpád the Conqueror leading his Magyars through the Carpathians out of the mysterious steppes; the arrogance of a Roman legionnaire; the chic of a French émigré; the legs of a Viennese actress. She was mixed by an old civilization. She was wonderful. She was European.

He asked her if she would like to dance, and she said not yet, that they should wait until the rest of the band came, and then they would do a *czardas* together. He said he didn't know how to do a *czardas*. He had always believed himself clumsy on a dance floor. He was of the jitterbug era, but he could never bring himself to try a dance strictly American, much less some wild Hungarian thing.

She said she'd teach him. He said, "You speak American English."

She said, "I've been dancing at the Arizona for ten years. The Arizona is exactly like an American club. All the tourists used to come to the Arizona, and when your Military Mission came to Pest after the war, it was their first stop. Even before food."

"I don't wonder," Jeff said. "I don't wonder."

He got a little drunk, because he was envious of Fred, and finally he dared a *czardas* with Rikki. Everybody laughed, and applauded, and Rikki said he danced very well, and he was drunk enough so that he believed her.

5

Then Quincy Todd summoned him with his eyes, and they left the table and went into the men's room. They were alone.

"All right," Quincy began, "give."

"You first," Jeff said. "Did you go back afterward and give her her language lesson?"

"Uh-huh."

Then Jeff told Quincy he had met Leonides in Bari, and run into him by accident, and there was nothing to do but bull with him about old times. Quincy Todd was satisfied. "I don't know what Morgan Collingwood would do to us," he said, "if he knew you were drinking with a Russian, and I was out with a Rumanian gypsy waitress. I really don't know."

"Just out with her?"

"That's all. She's a funny girl. Real moral. Nice girl, Marina."

"That Russian," said Jeff, "is a nice guy."

"So we both forget it," Quincy said. "Within these four walls."

"These four walls," Jeff pledged, and they went back to the table.

6

It was not until the evening was well along that Rikki spoke of the rumor. "I don't know whether any of you would tell me," she began, "even if you knew. But I heard it this afternoon at rehearsal. A high American official, flown secretly from Washington, had a conference last night with the Red Marshal. Here. In Budapest."

"Nonsense," Keller said.

"Oh, no, it is not nonsense," Rikki said. "They met in a restaurant. Some say a restaurant on the Vaçi Utca, and some say on Andrassy Utca. People saw them."

"Really?" said Quincy Todd.

"Yes. They talked of peace agreements."

"But there is peace," Todd said.

"I mean real peace."

"I can hardly believe it," Jeff said, because he was nervous, and because he felt he should say something.

"It must be true," said Rikki, "because all stocks went up on the Bourse this afternoon. And in the Black Bourse the forint rose. Yesterday the forint was twenty to the dollar, black. Today it is fifteen. Everybody is thrilled. Everybody is excited."

Quincy Todd looked at him in the oddest way, and Jeff asked Rikki to dance again, because he wanted her to talk no more of it.

7

It was two in the morning before he got to bed, feeling the fag end of his drink, and wishing he had another but knowing he'd be better in the morning if he took no nightcap. He dreaded hangovers. Not that his hangovers were any worse than anyone else's. It was that a hangover could kill your day. You couldn't think properly. Jeff liked to think. He liked the stimulus and exercise of thought.

He was turning out the light when Madame Angell came through his door. "The news!" she said. "The news!"

"What news?"

"I was just listening to Moscow broadcasting in Spanish to South America. Fancy what they said!"

"What?"

"They denied a report by the Swedish news agency that said the Russian Foreign Minister and your Secretary of State met here—in Budapest!"

"So what? So they denied it?"

"Then it must be so," said Madame Angell. "My flaming oath!"

"Don't you ever believe it!" Jeff said, and pulled the covers over his head. In a strange world, this was a strange city.

CHAPTER NINE

1

ONE DAY in mid-December the Admiral's secretary, a yeoman seconded to the State Department, called Fred Keller and said the Admiral would like to see him at once. Ordinarily the Admiral didn't issue such preemptory orders, through another party, to Keller. Ordinarily their discussions were informal, and held in the Legation residence over brandy or in the private corner at the Park Club which everyone called "admiral's country."

So Keller was disturbed. He was a little afraid of the Admiral anyway, although he was sure he never showed it, and certain that no one else could notice. When he forced himself to inspect this uneasiness, or fear, he only knew that the Admiral's hearty voice and didactic statements alarmed him. The Admiral could be wrong with loud and unchallengeable conviction. He told the Admiral's secretary he'd be right over.

2

Fred Keller was born June 1, 1909, in his father's town house. His father, who was always described as "the well known sportsman," was playing polo on Long Island at the time. This was to form the pattern between father and son henceforth. Fred knew his father only as a forbidding, overbearing, remote, and excessively masculine man whom he saw on occasions that grew less and less

frequent. They were usually unpleasant occasions. His mother could not bear to punish Fred. This was exclusively his father's job when his father was around. In the end his father disappeared altogether with the woman Julia Keller called "that prostitute from Carácas."

Thereafter Fred never felt quite safe in the world of men. He never felt safe in the Admiral's office. The Admiral, now that he thought about it, reminded him of his father.

3

When Fred Keller walked into the Admiral's office he was careful to conceal his unease. It was necessary to treat the Admiral with respect, but also it was necessary to maintain equality. When the Admiral sensed that a man was afraid of him, or awed by his rank, then that man's life became miserable.

The Admiral pointed to a chair. "Sit down, Fred," he said.

Keller sat down. It was best to be silent until the Admiral showed what was on his mind. Keller was sure there was nothing wrong with his work. Everything was moving smoothly.

"Fred," the Admiral said, "I just got a confidential letter from a friend of mine in Washington. I can't tell you his name, but he's very high in the government. I've been thinking over what he said, and I think we'd better speed up our operations."

"You mean Atlantis Project, I suppose, sir?"

"Well, yes. That's about the only thing we've got going here that isn't routine. Everything else would rock along whether I was here or not, but I'd like to see something come of Atlantis in a hurry."

Keller knew that while the Admiral had his idiosyncrasies, he was politically shrewd. His career proved that. He had gone into O.N.I., which had once been regarded as the graveyard of ambitious officers, at precisely the right time. And now, when political and traditional warfare merged into one, he occupied a strategic

post of command. Keller said, "I thought it was agreed, sir, that we should move slowly and with caution."

"Times change. Events move faster, and we have to speed up to keep pace. Besides, there's always the chance of competition." The Admiral leaned back in his chair. "What one man can think of, another can think of. I'd like to see us put this thing across first, wouldn't you, Fred?"

Now Keller knew what was up. In some other part of the world, somebody else was working on something approximating Atlantis Project. The Admiral, naturally, wanted the kudos that would go to those associated with the first success. Everyone remembered what Mark Clark and Robert Murphy had done in North Africa. Nobody remembered the names of those who built organizations behind the lines, later, in Italy, the Philippines, Belgium, and Burma.

"It may be dangerous to speed things up," Keller said. "We have to be sure of our recruits. We don't want to enlist any double agents. And remember that our own personnel isn't too experienced. This sort of thing is new to them, and—"

Keller hesitated, as he sought to frame words that would be clear to the Admiral, and yet not make him impatient and scornful. "And what?" the Admiral demanded.

"We have to remember that our own personnel is American. They have been brought up to believe there is something unclean about this type of work. Some of them don't like to use the Foreign Service as a cover. Fundamentally, they like to be frank and open."

"You have to fight fire with fire, don't you?" the Admiral said.

"Yes you do. But it takes a period of indoctrination."

"They've had enough indoctrination." The Admiral's voice showed the discussion was over. "I want to be able to report to Washington in one month that Atlantis has been formed, and is working. We've got to show results. You get that now, Fred, one month."

"Very well, sir."

"I don't want any slips."

"There won't be any, sir," Keller said, because he knew that was what the Admiral wanted to hear.

He felt relieved when he left the Legation. Nothing had gone wrong. The Admiral wasn't angry about anything. He was just requesting faster movement, as any commander might put ahead an invasion's D-Day. He shouldn't allow the Admiral to upset him like this.

4

One by one, that afternoon, Fred Keller called in the men on his team. They were, ostensibly, Commercial Attachés, oil technicians, financial experts, or in the offices of the Naval, Military, and Air Attachés.

He had assigned one to each likely field in the economic and cultural life of the country. They were seeking recruits against the day when there would be no American Mission in Budapest. They had been instructed to estimate these recruits carefully—estimate their political alliances, their balance, their discretion, their courage, their potential use and influence in the body of the city and the nation.

Keller, in keeping with standard security practice, called in the men of his team singly. It was not necessary or desirable that they know each other. This was protection against the possible unmasking of Atlantis from the lowest echelons. Each man on the team knew only what was necessary to form his own cell.

He didn't get to Jeff Baker until the following morning. He had purposely saved Baker for last. He had great hopes for Baker. For one thing the Budapest theater was traditionally a center of anti-totalitarian activity. And he had confidence in Baker's work. Baker seemed to show more imagination and perception than some of the others. Baker was a Princeton man.

5

Fred Keller lived in the Dohany Utca in an apartment which once had been the property of the Baron Toth. Wherever Fred lived he lived graciously. He knew the mechanics of travel and shipping, even in these difficult times. He had not been satisfied with Baron Toth's furnishings, and he had managed to get enough of his own stuff shipped across to do over the living room and master bedroom. He felt at home here. Surrounded by familiar objects—selected by his mother years ago—he felt secure and safe.

At nine o'clock he called Baker and told him to come over, "whenever you have the chance," but in a tone that would let Jeff know it was important. Baker said he'd be thirty minutes.

Keller told his butler to run up coffee. He himself preferred tea in the mornings, but he knew Baker drank an inordinate amount of coffee. He told the butler to dust the living room. He had the best butler in Eastern Europe, wooed away from the British Embassy by paying wages in dollars instead of pounds. But sometimes the butler was careless with the morning dusting. Keller could not abide a living room begrimed with ashes and disheveled with empty cups and glasses in the morning.

He changed his tie, and took off his lounging robe, and put on a sweater and sports jacket. He examined his hair in the bathroom mirror, and touched his temples with a dark liquid. He was too young to show gray.

He wondered how far Jeff Baker had progressed with Rikki Telredy. He discovered he had difficulty in imagining Baker as a lover. In one way Baker seemed only a lank and immature boy, and yet he possessed that lacquer of sophistication, that outer hardness, that comes to those who have been part of a conquering army. He found it difficult to estimate those kids. It was strange how little one man knew of the inner life of another man.

When Jeff arrived, the room was dusted and immaculate, and the coffee made. "Forget your hat again?" Keller greeted Baker.

Jeff put his hand on top of his head and said, "I did, didn't I?"

"There's really no harm to it, forgetting your hat," Keller said. "Except it makes you conspicuous. In this town a man without a hat, particularly an American, is conspicuous."

"I'll try to remember," Jeff promised.

Keller asked him how he was progressing, and Jeff told him fairly well. "Offhand," Jeff said, "most of the theatrical people dislike the Russians and like the Americans, and they aren't bashful about saying so. But I haven't been making any judgments on words alone. I've been trying to test their inner loyalties by presenting problems and situations and observing their reactions."

"That's smart," Keller agreed, "but we'll have to move faster from now on."

"I can't say," Jeff said, "that I'm sure of more than a few yet. Sure enough to ask them to join Atlantis." He had indexed them all in his head—the good, the doubtful, and the bad. Most were doubtful. Only a few were bad. Budapest had seen the Red Army. Perhaps it would have felt the same towards any army that in smoky-eyed anger and brute passion broke into the citadel of its civilization. Perhaps any army would have sacked and raped, and piled up its debt of hurt and hatred, had it rolled into the city over a carpet of its own dead, and with the memory of its own sacked and raped cities standing in its eyes. Jeff had seen Buda's suburbs of the dead—the acres of small wooden pyramids with the wood cracking and the red paint flaking off them as if they had been jerry-built in the boomtime of death. The army Budapest had seen was the Red Army, and Jeff deduced that was why most of the people were on the side of America.

"Well, how do they stack up—your theatrical people?" Keller inquired.

Jeff had listed, in his mind, something akin to a salesman's list of prospects. Now he ran through this list for Keller—the singers, composers, fiddlers, dancers, directors, playwrights, exhibitors, actors, producers.

"You ought to be able to do something with that Zukats," Keller told him when he had finished. "I should think he'd be completely dependent on Hollywood."

"He may be," Jeff said. "But he's a smoothie. I'm seeing him again this afternoon."

"And Miss Genghis Khan—what about her? You shouldn't have any trouble with her. She wants to get to America." Everyone in the Legation called Rikki Telredy Miss Genghis Khan.

"Oh, I'm sure she'll be all right," Jeff said. "Should I put the question to her? I'm seeing her tonight."

Keller smiled. "Seeing quite a bit of her, aren't you? All business, Jeff?"

Jeff wondered whether he had been poaching on private property in seeing Rikki so often. Sounded like it. Yet she always seemed willing to date him. "Well, you see," Jeff explained, "Miss Genghis Khan is especially useful because there isn't anybody she doesn't know."

"Now don't worry, Jeff," Keller said. "See her as often as you like. All of us have to sacrifice something, and I guess I can sacrifice Rikki."

Keller knew that Jeff would consider him most magnanimous. Baker would consider him a man who had so many women that he could give up a girl as beautiful and interesting as Rikki casually as he would hand a package of cigarettes to a guest who was out of cigarettes. Baker would look up to him as a man of the world, a man who was irresistible to women.

That was exactly what Jeff thought when he left the apartment.

CHAPTER TEN

1

JEFF WENT HOME and got his hat. He also changed his shirt from blue to white, and his tie to polka dot, and his suit from tweed to the best blue. Miklós Zukats, who owned five cinemas in the city, a stack of gold Swiss francs in a vault in Geneva, and a packet of RKO and Paramount stock in another vault in New York, regarded Jeff as a special emissary to him from Washington, and so Jeff dressed the part.

The masquerading always made him feel a little shabby, a little dirty. Along the Rakoczi and Andrásy Utcas Jeff had allowed it to become known that he was attached to the American State Department's Office of Information and Educational Exchange. He was interested in the showing of Hollywood's product, and the Department's own documentary films, in Hungary. He was interested in the exchange of theatrical talent, an enterprise that had once been normal and mutually profitable for both countries, but which now had become difficult and usually impossible. After the seizure of government by the Magyar Communists, the trickle of travel reopened in 1945 had steadily congealed, year by year, in the cold war.

Since his cover was readymade, perfectly fitted, and in the fashion of the times—for cultural propaganda was openly practiced by both sides—he was accepted without question for what he pretended to be. This made Jeff feel guilty, although he knew there was no reason for it. A cover was a normal device of political warfare. One

couldn't go around announcing, "I'm trying to get people to form an anti-Communist underground." If you did that, all your friends would soon be dead.

2

Jeff was always welcome in Zukats' office in the Rakoczi, although sometimes Jeff suspected it was only because his presence boosted the exhibitor's ego. Zukats regarded himself as a cosmopolite and citizen of the world. His office was decorated in Italian modern, which is perhaps more modern and extreme than Los Angeles modern. Copies of *Life* and the *London Illustrated News* were carefully exhibited on the chrome-legged table. He read *Variety* every week, and consequently was considered the Hungarian authority on advancements in the English tongue and affairs of the theater in New York and London. If an American diplomat visited his office to talk films, then the darkness could not be closing in around him. The world wasn't going to pot. It was only his imagination.

"Well," Zukats greeted Jeff this day, "did you hear what's happened now?"

"You mean the fighting in the Near East?" Jeff said. "That's hardly news."

"Oh, that business!" said Zukats, waving it away with a gesture of two fingers. "Let's not talk about it. No. I meant Lana Turner."

When Zukats met a political subject face to face he averted his mind, and his conversation crossed the street. This annoyed Jeff, but Jeff knew he could not afford to be annoyed. Zukats was important. He was important because of his money power in the Budapest theater and his connections with Broadway and Hollywood. Jeff saw him as a potential financial clearing house for the cell Jeff hoped to plant within the city's organism—a cell that would come to life on the day when neither he nor any other American remained in Budapest. Jeff said, "I didn't hear about Lana Turner."

"Again she is in trouble with her studio," Zukats said. "And me twitching for her!"

"You what?"

"As you say, I have a twitch for her. I like her. She draws. She is B.O. Also in Hollywood three years ago I met her personally. Such gams. At the same party I met the great producer Goldwyn. Such a great man! Never plays the red board."

"What do you mean?" Jeff asked, and told himself he'd have to start reading *Variety*. He'd ask Quincy Todd to make some sort of deal with the airline, so he could get *Variety*.

"It is not money alone he wants. He is hep to art."

Jeff opened a plastic cigarette box on the desk and took out a Camel. "Do you mind?"

"Please. Every week I have them shipped especially." Zukats winked. "There are ways."

Jeff congratulated himself. The communications lines of business always have a way of bridging the fissures of world disorder. But his instinct reined him in. "You know, Mr. Zukats, I think you ought to follow Goldwyn's example. If he makes good American pictures, you ought to show good American pictures."

"Oh, that again."

"That again. From the crap you show in your theaters the people of Budapest must have a peculiar opinion of America. They must think that one third of us are gangsters who own night clubs, and the other third cowboys, and the rest of us the dipsomaniac sons and daughters of millionaires."

Zukats shrugged. "It's good B.O."

"It isn't good propaganda. You're making it easy for the Communists. When you show pictures like that you're making Moscow's line sound true."

"You know how it is," Zukats said. "All your big stars are barred. They go and yap about the Communists, so they get barred here. It is their own fault. Why don't they clam up—Cooper and Taylor and the rest?"

"Something called the right of free speech," Jeff said. "Remember?"

"Does it do any good to have free speech, and no foreign grosses?" Jeff tried his technique of testing loyalty by forcing a decision. "I

can get you good pictures if you've got the courage to show them."

"What? Documentaries? Do you want me to go dark?"

"We'd rather have you show no American pictures than the ones you show now."

Zukats leaned back in his chair and folded his plump, pink hands across his stomach. "You know that I am your friend. Why, I am almost an American. You know that without American pictures half the houses in Budapest would go dark. Do you want to ruin your friends?"

"The time has come," Jeff said carefully, "when every man must take his stand. What will happen to you if war comes—or even if relations are broken? Where will you get your films then? What will happen to you when the state not only tells you what pictures to show, but owns all the theaters, and takes all the profits?"

Zukats' hands jumped nervously. "When war comes, I may not be here."

"You'll be here. Do you think that even now Rajk's police will let you out of the country?"

Jeff knew he had touched a sensitive spot deep inside Zukats' shell, for his dumpy body came out of the chair, and when he settled back again his usually pliable mouth was thin and tight. Jeff guessed that Zukats had already tried to leave Hungary—and failed.

At last Zukats said, "Now I will speak to you truly."

"That'll be a switch."

"Six months ago I applied for an exit permit. You know our exit permits?"

"Yes." No Hungarian could cross his border without one.

"I said I had to go to Hollywood to arrange for more pictures. They said no. I tried, then, with money. One hundred thousand forints! They still said no. So then I asked myself, 'What would the big men in Hollywood do if they were in my position?' I thought about this much, and I found the answer. Do you know what it was?"

"I haven't the foggiest notion."

Zukats rocked in his chair, and half smiled. "They would do what

was safe. They would go with the tide. For five years after Hitler came to power did Hollywood notice him? No. Does Hollywood attack Franco, or Trujillo, or Perón? No. It is not safe. It hurts the B.O. At this moment it is safe for Hollywood to be against Communism, just as ten years ago it became safe for Hollywood to be against Fascism. But if there was a Communist government in Washington, what would they do? Why, they would make and show Communist pictures, of course. They would say to themselves, 'If we do not do it, somebody else will.'

"I don't believe it," Jeff said, but in his heart he did believe it.

"Ah, I know them," said Zukats. "So I will tell you what I am going to do. So long as I can book American pictures, I will take them. Also I hope this talk of war comes to nothing. After all, I have more funds in dollars than in rubles. But if war comes, if the government takes over my theaters, it will be so arranged that I can still run them. I will do what is safe."

Jeff put his hand on his leg and squeezed until it hurt, because a diplomat never lost his temper. "Suppose, Mr. Zukats, that I recommended that my department request the American producers to stop sending you films of any kind?"

Zukats didn't stop smiling. "Nothing would happen, my boy. I don't think the producers would pay to your Department any attention. True, the best American films I cannot show. But we have still a good market here, and Hollywood will think of its foreign grosses."

Jeff rose. "Goodbye, Mr. Zukats," he said. It was disappointing, and surprising too, in a way. Zukats had such close connections with America. He dropped Zukats into the slot marked bad.

3

That night Jeff didn't call for Rikki until eleven because the floor show bored him except for her number. The Arizona's time of ascendancy had been the late '20's and middle '30's, and in this period it had been described as being resplendent as Ziegfeld's Follies, cosmopolitan as Zelli's in Paris, and wicked as a Port Sâid dive.

During the war it survived as a safety valve for Nazi and Hungarian officers on leave from the Russian front, and it enjoyed a brief revival in the wild days of the '45 inflation when American and Russian officers bombed the stage with bundles of million-pengo notes. Now it had assumed the city's gray mourning in this taut, still period while Pest waited in the eye of the hurricane. For two decades it had not been redecorated. Its draperies and furnishings bore the stains of six thousand nights of revel. All that had been spilled—champagne, cognac, Scotch, raki, vodka, Kentucky bourbon and Munich beer, many tears and some blood—all in time made the same brown stain.

The first three times he had seen Rikki dance his eyes had not left her, but on this night he watched the others who watched her. While she danced nothing moved except the pulse and throb of the music and Rikki. The dance she did was called new, and original, but it was old as woman. It is done, in variations, by many races, from the Ivory Coast to the Central Pacific. It is a simple dance. It has a clear and simple story, the inception, progress, and climax of an act of love. After Rikki did it in the Arizona it was her custom to remain for fifteen minutes in her dressing room, alone. It was her claim that otherwise she would not be safe, for the Arizona was still wicked. It was Jeff's belief that the dance exhausted her emotionally. She did it that way.

The Arizona was amphitheater-shaped, the tables rising terrace by terrace from the circular dance floor. Jeff was seated at a table three terraces above the floor, a table that he now regarded as his table. For minutes before he could expect her, he kept his eyes on the curtained door to the left of the stage. Finally she came out, conspicuous in the silver lamé, her well-kept but by no means new broadtail coat over her arm. She moved directly to his table. When Jeff rose and pulled back her chair he knew that all those in the Arizona—the too-loud and buoyant operators on the Bourse, the Russian captains and lieutenants, the gloomy Finnish importers, dark and suspicious Turks, the Yugoslav delegation from Cominform, the Russian propagandists of *Agitprop*, the sleek and effemi-

nate Rumanians more interested in conversation than in their women—all these were watching him, and envying and hating him.

"Well, where tonight?" she greeted him. "The Park Club, I hope. I am hungry."

"You're always hungry, Rikki."

"If you did my dance every night, and other dances also, and rehearsed the new show two afternoons a week, and carried everything up and down five flights of stairs because of no elevator, and walked everywhere because of no car, you would be hungry, too. It is true that I eat three thousand calories a day—four thousand when I can get butter or fats. But do you see any fat on me? Look! Look, you Jeff!"

Jeff looked, and said, "Don't get me wrong, Rikki. You're not fat."

"I will have a drink—a raki—and then we will go to the Park Club and have one of those wonderful club sandwiches with ham, chicken, and turkey. Is that possible?"

"You know, Rikki, I never see you alone. We never have a chance to talk alone, and I have important things to say to you, Rikki. You know that." In her way Rikki could be as important to Atlantis as Zukats could have been in his. She was known to all the city, had entrée to every circle, and possessed the faculty of accumulating information. News and gossip never flew past her. But what he had to say to her, and ask her, he could say and ask over this table so long as the waiters didn't overhear.

"You can see me alone if you wish, Jeff. I think you have misunderstood me." She raised her eyes, so queerly slanted, so wise and yet so sensitive to hurt. The music started, and Jeff took her hand and led her down the terraces.

The Arizona's dance floor revolved, and this created a pleasant illusion for the dancers. Even when standing still, they had the sensation of smooth movement, and the faces at the tables whirled past without effort. So Jeff stood still now, and tightened his arm around her, so that her face pressed against his shoulder, and the perfume of her hair was in his nostrils, and he could feel the whole lithe length

of her body against his. She put her hand on his chest and eased him away. "Take it easy," she said. "No hurry. If you want me, Jeff, I will go to your place tonight. But first we will eat. You have food there?"

"Canned stuff," Jeff said. "And it isn't much of a place. It isn't like Fred Keller's. It's only one room."

"One is all that is necessary."

"I'm not rich, like Fred."

"Are you really worried about Fred? Have you jealousy?"

"I don't know. I suppose so."

"Do you know what I do when I go to Fred Keller's? You will laugh." He could feel the laughter inside her under his hand. "But do not tell him I told you. He would be furious, and I could not go there any more. I take sun baths."

"No!"

"It is truth. Fred has the only American sun lamps in Pest. How do you think I keep my brown? Can I go to the Riviera, or Yalta, or the islands on the Marmara? And how do you think Fred keeps his wonderful brown? Every day he has his lamp."

Jeff was irritated, and he thought he must be jealous after all. "Is that all you do there?" he asked, again standing still and allowing the floor to dance for him. "Doesn't he look at you—or something?"

"No. Not even that. Fred is a dear."

Jeff wondered where he had heard that before, and he remembered that Susan had said the same thing, and he wished he hadn't thought of Susan. "So he's a dear," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean."

Rikki ducked an elbow and guided him expertly to an open space in the floor's center, where the movement was not so giddy. She said, "It is not something one should say unless one is certain. Usually a woman can tell instantly, but about Fred I cannot decide. This I know, that he does not make love to women. He has such a polite way. He is always so gentle with women. Women seem

necessary to him, yet he does not love women. Everyone must love someone. So who and what does he love?"

"Beats me, Lieutenant," Jeff said.

4

There were shadows along the Revay Utca. Some of the shadows were black and solid and poised for movement, so Jeff carefully chained his jeep. Unless one chained his jeep it would certainly vanish. Even with chains, sometimes a jeep vanished, piecemeal, or entirely if one left it in the streets the whole night. He drove his own jeep now. He had discovered it was simpler, and perhaps more secure considering his job, to drive the jeep himself instead of using a Hungarian driver from the Legation pool.

Jeff rang the night bell for the elevator, and it made a great clangor, and Sandor came out from his room under the stairs, belting up his trousers. Ordinarily Sandor was surly and disgruntled when disturbed after midnight, but when he saw Rikki his eyes became bright and observant, and he pretended courtesy. This was the first time the American had taken a woman to his room. It was therefore, for Sandor, an important piece of news. In the morning—or perhaps this night by telephone—he would inform his district supervisor, who in turn would report the matter to secret police headquarters. Rajk's organization would turn it over, since it was an international as well as an internal matter, to the Russian *Ministerstvo Vnutryennik Del*. In time he would get an extra ten or twenty forints, and a good mark.

"If you need me later," Sandor said in German as they reached Jeff's floor, "do not hesitate to ring."

"Oh, we'll use the stairs. It's not bad walking down," Jeff said.

"It is not necessary. Always I am at your service, Herr Baker."

"We'll see."

They went into the room, and Rikki said, "I don't like that man. He has bad eyes."

"He's a bad man."

5

Rikki looked around the room, and slipped off her coat and Jeff put it on a hanger in the closet. From the closet shelf he took a half loaf of round brown bread, a box of crackers, jars of cheeses, a can of chicken, and tinned butter.

Jeff marveled at how she ate. She ate like a puddler off the night shift. When they finished, and Rikki was wiping the crumbs from the table, Madame Angell came in and said she'd heard them talking, and would they like tea. The water was already boiling. Rikki said Madame Angell was very kind.

Madame Angell brought the tea, and said Radio Lyon was very exciting that night. Radio Lyon reported a coup in Azerbaijan, and Russian troops in the area, and also massing on the Kars frontier. It certainly looked as if war could not be far off. Jeff said that was very interesting. Madame Angell wondered whether Jeff and the young lady cared to listen to Radio Lyon. Jeff said no thanks. Madame Angell said the situation was critical, and they should listen. This week had been like the week of Munich. Jeff found a box of hard candies he had concealed between his shirts, and presented it to Madame Angell. She went away.

Rikki climbed on the bed, and piled the pillows against the wall, and leaned back against them. "Now what is this private thing of which you wish to speak?" she asked, jibing at Jeff with the word, "private."

"This business of your going to America," Jeff told her. "Suppose it falls through? Suppose you have to stay here, and you are still here when war comes?"

"When war comes—how lightly you say it! You know only one side of war, you Americans. You cannot imagine how it is to lose your cities, your people, your country, to be degraded like slaves and hungry like beasts. I think you made a mistake with your atom bombs. The second one, you should have dropped on Chicago."

"If war comes," Jeff amended. Twice this day he had said, "when war comes," and it worried him.

"What will I do? I will try to live, and survive, as I did before. Also I will wish for an American victory. It would be better." She reached across the bed, took an ash tray from the table and placed it beside her, and then added, with candor and simplicity, "You see, my Jeff, I was raped by a Russian. Perhaps rape is not the right word. A Russian came into my home, and there was nothing else to do, although I think in the end he did not enjoy it much. I think in the end he was ashamed. It did not harm me, except the embarrassment for my mother and younger brother. They were also at home."

Jeff thought, now any American brother would have beaten that Russky into a pulp. He said, "Your brother—didn't he—"

"No. I am glad. My brother still lives."

Jeff sat on the edge of the bed, close to her. The time had come for the question. "Rikki, would you do more than wish for an American victory? Would you act? Would you fight for our freedoms—yours and mine—after I was gone?"

"Do you mean would I be an *espione*—an agent?"

"Perhaps not that." Here he must choose his words carefully. She knew what he was doing too. He was asking her to lay her life on the line. "If there was a Hungarian underground, would you be in it? Would you help us? Would you be on the side of the West?"

She looked at him out of the corners of her Asiatic eyes, and Jeff wondered whether any man could long hold a secret from her. He thought, what an intelligent, what a perfect agent she would be. "I will answer you," she said, "but before I answer there are things I must say to you that you will not like."

"Go ahead. I can take it."

"Not about you. About your country."

He was silent. He didn't like people to be critical of his country when they had never been in his country, and he knew she was going to be critical.

"In the beginning," she said, "I must tell you how I once felt about America—like the Moslem dreams of Heaven, like that. I came here from Debrecen, a town in the east. You know it?"

"No." He wished she wouldn't get so serious so fast. She was like other European girls he'd known. They took their love affairs casually, but their politics seriously, which was just the opposite of most girls back home.

"It is a place of mud and swine and wheat. It is necessary to Pest, but it is not known to Pest. So why should you know it? I had danced in Debrecen—I was queen of the *czardas*—and an uncle gave me the money to come to Pest. First I danced at a little place which like the Arizona is on the Nagymézo Utca. I danced there five years. Ten years I have been at the Arizona. I am thirty-four. Do I look it?"

"No. You look much younger." This was true.

"All this time I thought of America. You know how it is in my profession, Jeff. You can be the greatest dancer in the world outside of New York, but until you dance in New York you are nobody. So I thought of America, and I studied America—yes, your history, written in English—and I talked to Americans who came to the Arizona. They were so happy, so generous, so impetuous. They had such truth in them. Some were from New York and Hollywood, seeking talent. There is much talent in Hungary. I was offered jobs. I did not take the first offers. I had advice from Hungarians already in America. They would write me, do this; don't do that. Finally I took an offer. A year's contract. In that same week the borders closed. We became a province of Germany."

Jeff rebuked her. "That wasn't America's fault. That was your own lack of guts."

"You people—" said Rikki. "You have never had the pistol against your head! Anyway now I do not feel the same. We have talked much about me going to America, Jeff, but I do not know truthfully whether I wish to go. If I knew I could go tomorrow, I might not go."

"Why not?"

"You have changed. Something has happened to you. You are not the same." Rikki moved angrily. "All at once it seemed to happen. I was in Linz for a special engagement—yes, you Jeff, for a Nazi—when your troops came there. They were so wonderful, Jeff. You have no idea."

She put her hands over her breasts, and shook her head as if to toss out words that would not come easily. "What happened to those men, Jeff? Where did they go? Do you keep all your good ones at home? You will not answer me, no?"

Jeff didn't say anything. He could not help comparing the quiet dignity of the men of the 339th with the uncertain boys, afflicted with a conqueror complex, whom he had seen in the Vienna occupation.

"Later that same year—it was 1945—" Rikki went on, "I walked into your finance office—yes, the finance office here in the Mission on Szabadzag-tér—and I saw one of your officers. Do you know what he was doing, Jeff? He was looking at rough diamonds through a jeweler's glass. And the shelves of the office were lined with cameras, and watches, and binoculars like a pawn shop. This was the time for the pengo inflation, when we were stripping our fingers and our closets so as to eat, and it was possible for one with dollars to make a profit on our misery. I was sick. I cannot forget."

Jeff Baker had always believed in the intrinsic goodness of his country and his countrymen. America might make mistakes, but they were mistakes of judgment, not of the heart. This girl, Rikki, was saying his heart wasn't right, and he didn't like it. But all he could think of to say was, "There are bad apples in every barrel."

Rikki said, "It is not money that we ask from America, Jeff. It is something of the spirit. You had it once. Where did it go? You were climbing to the stars, and stretching out your hands to pull us up with you. But now, your eyes are on the ground just before you—not a meter more."

Jeff was growing angry. "What about ERP? What about that? You've been listening to Soviet propaganda, Rikki."

"Of course I listen to Soviet propaganda, to British propaganda,

to American propaganda, to all other propaganda. We Europeans understand propaganda. We have learned to separate the fact, the motive from what we hear. We can smell what is hidden. We have been educated in propaganda by a master, Jeff—by Goebbels.”

“Well, what about ERP?”

“It sounds good,” Rikki said, “until one remembers the speeches in your Congress. One remembers how they haggled and bickered not only on how much should be given, but what should be demanded in return. I do not speak for Hungary. We have no right to your help, because we are in the Soviet orbit, and our stinking government would not and could not accept help and friendship if it was offered. I speak for your Western friends. What do you want of them? Would not peace and stability, payable to your children, be a fair rate of interest?”

“My Department isn’t responsible for what is said in the Senate, as you are smart enough to know. You Europeans can never understand our free speech. You never believe that anyone in or out of public life, except in my Department and the Army and Navy, can say whatever he wishes about policy. That’s what confuses you people.”

Rikki made a face. “Your Department! Do you think anyone trusts your Department now? There were people who believed you. I did. What happened to the Four Freedoms? And the Atlantic Charter? And the United Nations? Do you know what I think now? I think your Department betrayed the United Nations.”

“Rikki!”

“It is what I think. Your Department has no policy except the expedient, and fear of the Soviets. You can even be blackmailed by the Arabs. Your Department is the upholder of Franco, and the Argentine dictator. All over the world you support bad people. In China the corrupt ones, in Greece the worst of the reaction, in Turkey a police state as bad as we have here. Is it that your leaders are all old men, or cynics?”

“You like the Russkies better?” Jeff snapped.

“Don’t be silly. There is one thing more. You. I thought you

brought me here for one thing, and it is something else. Perhaps it is only my pride, but I did not come here to be enlisted as a spy."

He recognized that there was nothing more to say. He tried to keep his temper, but he said, "Okay, I guess this is where you get off." He took her coat from the closet, and she wormed into it with angry movements of her shoulders, and without speaking. They walked down the steps, she remaining one step ahead of him.

He helped her into the jeep, and then he got in himself, and wrestled with the heavy lock on the chain.

Finally he had the stubborn chain off the wheel, turned the key in the ignition, and jammed his foot down on the starter.

His next conscious action was raising his head and asking for water.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1

It was NOT a big bomb. It was an absurdly small bomb. It was a petard, of no more power than an old-fashioned July Fourth giant cracker, and perhaps not as much as the plastic Red Devil grenades used by the Italians, so it is said, to frighten the enemy to death.

Its repercussions were felt in New York and Washington, but they were muffled by greater events and bigger bombs. For the world over, this was a bad week. The *Journal-American* got an eight-column banner out of it for one edition.

REDS BOMB U.S. DIPLOMAT

BUDAPEST, Dec. 17 (INS)—(delayed by censor)—Red goon squads today were blamed for last night's bombing of an American Legation automobile, and the wounding of J. W. Baker, of Washington, D. C., Legation Third Secretary. The bomb was planted in Mr. Baker's car while it was parked in front of his home on Revay Street. Baker will survive.

Admiral Randolph Blakenhorn, American Minister to Hungary, said, "This is an obvious attempt to frighten us out of the country. They won't get away with it. Baker is one of the most valuable members of my staff."

Admiral Blankenhorn will visit the Foreign Ministry to lodge a formal protest. He indicated . . .

The *Daily Worker* gave a different version, in a small box on page three.

BRITISH CAUSING TROUBLE?

BUDAPEST, Dec. 17—British agents provocateurs, or an aroused member of the Hungarian proletariat, were responsible for the bomb which damaged an American Legation limousine last night, Budapest police believe. J. W. Baker, a Third Secretary who was in the car, was unhurt.

Baker, police pointed out, was accompanied by Rikki Telredy, an actress. The bomb could have been thrown by a Hungarian patriot angered by Baker's attention to Telredy, or it could have been the work of British agents seeking to create an excuse for a diplomatic and economic attack on Hungary, according to the police theory.

The Minister of the Interior said the matter was of little consequence.

The *Herald Tribune* had the most complete story.

by Seymour Freidin

BUDAPEST, Dec. 17—(delayed by censor)—An American Legation jeep, clearly painted with American flags, was booby-trapped last night. Jeff W. Baker, Legation Third Secretary, suffered shock. His companion, actress Rikki Telredy of the famous Arizona Club, was uninjured.

A bomb was planted under the jeep's hood while it was parked in front of Baker's Revay Street residence. When he put his foot on the starter it exploded, blowing the hood back, and cracking but not splintering the windshield.

It is impossible to place responsibility for the bombing, and it is doubtful if the Communist-controlled Budapest police will make much of an effort. Anti-American Hungarians could have done it, or Red Army troops, or the police themselves. Or it could have been done by a gang of

young hoodlums, or by frustrated car thieves who found the jeep securely chained.

Admiral Randolph Blankenhorn said . . .

2

When the explosion came Rikki could not see for a minute, and her nose and mouth were filled with smoke and fumes, and she was deafened, and if she screamed she did not know it. Then the first shock passed, and she thought of fire, and she groped for and finally found the lever that opened the canvas door and threw herself outside. Not until then did she think of Jeff. She didn't see him at the wheel so she looked in the back thinking he might have been blown backwards on the floor, and he was not there. She cried, "Jeff! Jeff!" and while she could not hear anything except a jumbled ringing in her ears she knew she was screaming as loud as she could.

She walked around to the other side of the jeep and she saw him. He did not look or act like Jeff. He did not look or act like any man she had ever seen. He was on his belly in the gutter and he was clawing at the dirt and stones in jerky, digging motions. He was saying words but what they were she could not understand, and in between the rush of words high-pitched sobbing sounds came out of his throat. She kneeled beside him in the slime and raised his head and talked to him in Hungarian as a panicky mother talks to a hurt child. She stopped talking in Hungarian, suddenly, and talked in English. "What's the matter, Jeff? What's the matter? Oh, be quiet, Jeff. Be quiet! I am here. I am here. It is all right. I am here. Oh, Jeff! Jeff! Please be quiet, Jeff. Please, please stop! Stop!"

He tore his head away from her hands and buried his face in the dark place between curb and gutter and Rikki rose and began to shout for help.

She shouted first towards St. Stephen's, at one end of the street, and then turned and shouted towards the Opera House at the other

end, and then screamed at Jeff's house. In the short, dark length of Revay Utca there was no movement, no new light, no answering sound. There was only the babbling man, and the echo of her terror. She stopped screaming. She realized that the people of Budapest do not stir from their beds when there are loud and sudden noises in the night. When the lion roars in his kill, do the small creatures of the jungle venture out to see what has happened?

She turned to Jeff, and the noises still issued from him. She tried once again to lift his head, failed, and fell across his body, sobbing.

3

It was thus that the police from the station at 60 Andrassy found them. There were six policemen in this emergency squad. It was the squad that always went to the scene of bombings and shootings, and they knew how to handle it. They dropped off their truck alongside the jeep. Two men with rifles paid no attention to the jeep, but concentrated on the street and the surrounding houses, to guard against a trap.

The leader of the squad, a corporal, glanced at the girl huddled over the man. By his sound, the man was badly hurt. The corporal looked inside the hood of the jeep, smelled, examined the wires of the bomb, one twisted around a spark plug and the other attached to the starter wire. He saw how the explosion had blown the hood back against the windshield. The explosion had created its own armor, and he wondered how it was that the man was hurt. Perhaps he was shot. He saw the American flags painted below the windshield. This was going to be something, he could see. With this, he would have to be careful.

He took the woman by the waist and lifted her up and stood her on her feet, and when she continued to sob he shook her shoulders. "Shut up!" he said. She was quiet. Then he knelt on one knee beside the man and tried to turn him. The man resisted, and the man was tall and very strong. "Hey, I need help," he called. Two of his men came and the three of them forced the man over on his

back, holding the arms so they would not be clawed. The man was a mess, and his eyes were wide in madness, and his arms and legs jerked and shook, but there was no blood. "I have seen this," one of the policemen said. "This is shellshock. This is battle fear."

"Yes," another said, "I have seen this too."

The corporal turned to the girl. "Were you in this Willys with him?"

"Yes."

"He is an American, is he?"

"Yes, he is American. This is his home here. Help me take him inside. He needs help at once."

"Not so fast," the corporal said. "He will live. How did this happen? Who is he? What were you doing in this Willys with him? Who are you?"

"I will tell you all that later. Help me get him inside. He must have a doctor."

"No, we will put him in the truck and take him to the station. A doctor can attend him there. We will take you too."

"*Mafla*—stupid ass," the woman said. "I am Rikki Telredy. I know Rajk. I know the whole government. You will do what I say or there will be trouble. I promise you."

The man was quieter now, and the corporal rose. "So you are Telredy?" he said. "Always you actresses go with the Americans. Why is it?"

"Perhaps they are better men."

"Or have more money," the corporal said. "All right, we will carry him inside. But we will wait with him until his own people come and give me a receipt for him. I will not be responsible if anything happens."

4

So they carried Jeff inside, and Sandor came out from under the stairs, his eyes blinking in excitement, and took them up in the elevator. They laid Jeff on the bed and wiped the filth from his face with wet towels, while Rikki telephoned the Park Club. She

asked for Fred Keller and told him what had happened and he said he'd be right over with the Mission doctor.

Jeff was still babbling, but not so wildly now. When she spoke to him he still did not reply. She looked in the medicine closet in the bathroom. There were medicines there, but none that would help him except aspirin, and aspirin seemed silly. She saw a bottle of vitamin pills, and without thinking popped two of them into her mouth and swallowed them.

Until Fred Keller and Quincy Todd came with Major L'Engle, the Mission doctor, she sat on the bed, running her fingers along Jeff's temples, and shielding his wide eyes from the light. The policemen found Jeff's cigarettes, smoked, and grew bored. Every few minutes the corporal would think of a question, and she would answer in a monosyllable. When Jeff spoke now, she could distinguish words, but they did not make sensible sentences.

5

Major L'Engle was an Army Department doctor who had served in France and Germany, and later in a base hospital in England, and he knew combat fatigue when he saw it. "All right," he ordered, "everybody clear out!" He looked at Rikki. "You stay. I'll have to look at you later. Don't want any delayed shock."

The corporal wanted to know who was going to give him a receipt, and Fred Keller said he would. Keller said this was a most serious matter, and he trusted that the corporal would make a complete examination of the jeep, and make every effort to discover who was responsible. The corporal shrugged his shoulders and said it was always difficult in a bombing of this type. Also, once the criminals fled, it became a political matter, and therefore a matter for the secret police. No doubt the secret police would make an investigation. Keller and Quincy Todd both laughed. The corporal pocketed a pack of Jeff's cigarettes, summoned his men, and left.

"You two can stay if you want," Major L'Engle said then. "Just wanted to get rid of those monkeys."

He lifted Jeff's eyelids, and examined the palms of his hands. He loosened Jeff's collar, and pulled a blanket over his body. "He's got a bad dose of it," he said. "Look at his arms and legs. There's a lot working inside him."

"Bad dose of what?" Keller asked.

"Combat fatigue. Uncontrollable fear. It's a young man's occupational disease."

"It scares me," Quincy Todd said. "Can you catch what he's saying?"

"I wish I could use narco-synthesis," Major L'Engle said. "We're not equipped for it here. Looks like we ought to be, doesn't it? Haven't any sodium pentothal. But I'll cool him down with Blue Eighty-Eights."

"What's that?" Keller asked.

"Sodium amytal." Major L'Engle was a tightly knit man who wore a military mustache and he carried a military kit. In the bottom of his bag he found a fat, round, blue bottle. Into his hand he shook two pills, bullet-shaped, blue, and long as the end of a man's second finger.

"Can he swallow those?" Rikki asked.

"Sure. You get some water, Rikki. And you two fellows hold his arms when I'm ready."

The major cradled Jeff's head in one arm, forced the pills into his mouth and shook them into his throat, and made him swallow water after. It reminded Rikki of a veterinarian forcing medicine into an injured and frightened dog.

"What's he talking about?" said Quincy Todd. "Lot of Italian names, and something that sounds like fire coordinates. I never heard him swear like that before. Sounds like he's fighting a battle."

"He is," said Major L'Engle. "He's fighting a battle all over again."

"It must be hell to do that," said Quincy Todd soberly.

In thirty minutes Jeff's trembling was not so apparent, and his incoherent words were spoken thickly and slowly. Then at last he was silent, and his breathing became regular, and he slept.

Rikki began to cry, and Major L'Engle put his arm around her shoulders and said, "Now, honey, I'll have to find something for you."

She said, "I'm all right. I am perfectly all right. I want to stay here." Then she saw herself in the mirror. She looked her thirty-four years, and the three others she never mentioned. She looked all of them. "All right," she said. "I'll go."

"I'll give you a couple of pills. You can take them when you get home. Fred and Quincy will take you, and I'll stay here until he comes out of it."

"Is he going to be all right?" Keller asked. "I mean, this isn't permanent, is it?"

"No. Oh, no. He'll have to stay in bed for a few days, and rest for maybe a week. Then he'll be as good as ever."

"Suppose he has a recurrence?"

"He won't—unless he gets another bomb."

"We'll all have to be more careful. No more using a car without a driver. I'll get Quigley out of bed, and send him up here just in case."

"Yes," the Major said, "we'll all have to be more careful."

6

When Jeff lifted his head and opened his eyes his mouth was thick and parched and his head and face felt swollen and he asked for water. Then he saw L'Engle sitting on the edge of the bed, and Quigley in a chair close by. "Hello, Major. Hello, Quig," he said. "Christ, what a hangover! My mouth is full of goat wool. Can you hear what I'm saying? It's morning, isn't it?"

The Major had a glass of water in his hand, as if he had been waiting. Jeff drank, and said, "Where's Rikki? What happened?"

"You were booby-trapped."

"Oh. What about Rikki?"

"She's okay. Wasn't scratched. Wasn't much of an explosion."

"What happened to me?"

"Baker, that's something I can't tell you. You'll have to tell me."

"I don't understand."

"You must've had a pretty bad shock, in the war."

Jeff raised himself on his elbows. "Oh, that's it. I did have a shock, I suppose. No worse than others. Not as bad as some."

"Hospitalized for combat fatigue?"

"You mean did I crack up?"

"That's what I mean."

"No, I don't think so. They took me back to the station hospital in Florence, but then they decided I wasn't so bad, and they sent me to rest camp for a couple of weeks. You know the Fifth Army Rest Camp? The Hotel Imperial in Rome? Boy, was it wonderful!"

"Ever get any narco-synthesis treatment?"

"No. They didn't think I needed it." This wasn't precisely true. The medics in Florence had thought he needed it. But there were so many others in worse shape that when he'd pulled himself together, when his pride conquered his fear, they'd let him go to rest camp instead of base hospital.

Major L'Engle looked at Jeff's hands again. "I think they were wrong," he said, very quietly. "However, that's all past, and you are going to be all right, and Quig is here to see that nobody tosses any more bombs around. But if you were able to tell me everything that happened to you—the thing that sent you to the station hospital—you'd be better off."

"It wasn't much," Jeff said. "Some *Nebelwürfe* came into my position. That's all there was to it."

7

Of course that wasn't all there was to it, but it was all he could tell—all he could ever consciously tell.

When the 85th Division was assigned to take the heights commanding Futa Pass Jeff knew nothing of the grand strategy—nothing of the decision of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to order an offensive in Italy to contain the German divisions. All he knew was

that the company would kick off at 0200 hours and his platoon would go first and their final objective was Mt. Altuzzo and he was to keep going until another wave leap-frogged him.

He also knew that he was afraid. He was always afraid in battle. There was no waking moment when he was in range of an enemy shell that he was not afraid. He was aware that he felt this fear more acutely than most of the others. It was his damned imagination that made him afraid. Whenever he was under the enemy's direct observation he could visualize a Kraut officer training his glasses on him, personally, and ordering a round. And he could imagine what he would look like after the shell had torn him up. He knew what shells could do to the frail and yielding flesh of man. He had seen.

And he was afraid because he was a smart soldier who kept track of casualty percentages in the combat infantry, and he could estimate his chances, which were never very good, and which got worse with every action. He was deathly afraid of mines and booby traps. He always tried to put his feet only on the fresh tracks of heavy vehicles. He never opened a door, or sat on a toilet in a newly captured village, without careful preliminary examination. His nerves were tuned to every sound of battle. The soldier who has an ear for battle—who can distinguish between all the sinister sounds with which death announces its arrival—lives longer.

He tried to conceal all his fears from his men. If his men guessed he was afraid, his platoon would go to pieces, and the company would suffer. The failure of a single small unit would cause trouble, and unnecessary casualties, all along the line. So every minute he was holding in his fear, for he had pride in his outfit and in the way his men regarded him.

In the late afternoon they rode in trucks almost as far as the regimental CP in Scarperia, hit the ground there, and immediately came under fire. You will remember that it was very dry in Italy that autumn, and the vehicles and the scuffling boots of the men raised a tattling cloud of dust as they pressed forward. Jeff cursed the dust, for he knew it invited shellfire. As he had expected, the German SP

guns up in the mountains fired into the dust all the afternoon. At the crossroads in Scarperia Jeff lost his communications sergeant, who was an old and reliable friend, and from that moment Jeff was depressed, and had a premonition he would die.

In his progress up the Italian boot he had accumulated a number of fetishes. Twice, while whistling, shells had come in on him. Now he never whistled. He had shaved the morning of the first landing, and had come through the landing unhurt. So now he shaved before every battle, which his men thought curious and in some way proof that he was cool and reliable. In his pocket he carried a wrist watch that didn't run, because it had been with him in the first landing. And always, before battle, he said a prayer under his breath. It was very short and simple. "Please God, get me through this one time, and I won't ask again." The words were always the same, but he always knew he would ask again.

So they came to the jumping-off place, and flopped down in a little dry ditch shielded by dusty bushes. He had not known there would be a ditch there, and it was handy because the enemy's heavy machine guns were searching this ground, and his mortars were nervously working it over.

In the dusk when his silhouette could not be spotted he stood up on a mound and surveyed the place where he must go. It was the first line he had ever seen that looked like a line. In this light the mountains cleaved together, and became an unbroken wall, an escarpment that towered over him, so that he had to lift his chin high to see the crest. It did not seem possible that anyone could climb this wall in the night, much less fight his way up. "My God," he said aloud, "they're looking right down our throats!"

And he had then the conviction that even in this dusk with the mountains red in the west and black in the east they could see him. They were watching. They could see him coming. They were waiting.

His bazooka man said, "Ain't good, is it, Lieutenant?"

And Jeff said, "You never had it so good! Look at that sunset! Ever see a sunset like that?"

Jeff heard his bazooka man moving back along the ditch, and whispering, and he heard the muffled laughter of his men. He knew they would be repeating, "Did you hear what he said? We never had it so good! Ain't that rich!" So he believed his men were going to be all right, and he told them to eat and get their rest. He wished he could eat or rest, but he couldn't, for his imagination was leading him into black and fearful places.

Dark brought the storm. Behind him the earth erupted in barrage, and five hundred shells seared the sky, and the world trembled. He thought, thank God that stuff is going out. But whenever the fire slackened, he could hear the German shells come in with a crash like the short snarl of an animal. The one that landed in his platoon he did not hear coming. There was a crack and red flash and the whoosh of heated air and jagged iron. After he picked himself up and checked the line of men he found he must attack five men shy. And his own percentages had worsened.

He could not sleep, although the others seemed to sleep. He grudged each minute that slipped by on his watch (the one that ran), and he found himself wishing crazy things, such as how wonderful it would be if time would turn backward, and the minute hand would move the other way. He thought of yesterday, and wished he could live yesterday over again. He wished he could live it all over again, even the bad days, because no day could be as bad as this. He tried not to think of tomorrow, for there might be no more tomorrows.

The last hour was the worst, and his eyes hardly left his watch. Fifteen minutes before 0200 the guns all opened at once and he thought surely the sky must crack and fall in. The 4.2 chemical mortars beat their iron tom-toms not so far in front, and he was grateful for them, but he hoped they remembered to roll their fire up the mountains when he kicked off.

He sensed the men stirring around him, and he passed the word. When the minute hand touched the hour he said, "Okay, let's go." He climbed out of the ditch and moved forward, his body and mind concentrating on making himself small. Out of the corner of his eye

he could see his men moving along with him, and he felt a measure of relief. Every platoon leader is relieved when he sees his men are with him.

Almost immediately he saw what would have to be done. There was a fence of tracer bullets across his path, coming from a machine gun on the left. He had been taught that tracers at night looked deadlier than they actually were, and you should ignore them and press on. This was probably a good theory until you actually saw the tracers. Then it was no good. He thought they should get that gun.

They did get the gun, and then miraculously there was no tracer wall to cross, and it seemed that they walked through a lane. There was fire and terror on both sides, but straight ahead miraculously it was not bad. So he walked straight ahead towards the deeper black that was the mountains. They went on until they were climbing, and Jeff wondered whether they had gone too far.

Then he saw the bulk of this hill and realized that he crouched at its very base. He thought it would be good if he went up this hill, although he had not been told to take any hills. He saw little red goutts of rifle fire from the top of the hill, and heard a burp gun working up there. He was surprised there was nothing else, but perhaps the shells had knocked out whatever else there had been.

His bazooka man said, "Where the hell you goin', Lieutenant?"

Jeff said, "Up the hill."

His bazooka man said, "I don't think we ought, Lieutenant."

Jeff said, "Come on."

Somebody in the darkness laughed and said, "You never had it so good, you lanky bastard!" And he could hear men laughing all around him and they went up the hill and at the top they found six Krauts, two of them wounded. They had to kill the Kraut officer, and the others gave up. The Krauts said they were from the Fourth Para Division, and had been expecting the attack for a week. They said they were all that was left of a company. The bombardment had killed all the rest. You could see that.

Jeff sent two men back with the three whole Krauts, and he in-

structed them to tell the Captain he had his platoon up on this hill, but he didn't know what hill it was. He was sure he had no flanks, so the hill would be hard to hold if there was a counter-attack and he suggested that the Captain bring up the rest of the company when the Captain found out what hill he was on. Also he needed a communications team. It would be best if they could get wire to the top of this hill, because he thought it would make a good O.P. But anyway he had to have a walkie-talkie.

He told his men to dig in.

In the early dawn he stared north and west until his eyes watered, and finally the landscape began to come clear. "Oh, Christ!" he said, and involuntarily ducked. It looked as if he could spit across to the top of Altuzzo. Directly opposite, on the level of his eyes, was the corkscrew road that ran up Altuzzo, and there were Germans on this road with tanks and self-propelled guns and queer-looking equipment. The guns were firing far behind him. He looked to the left, and there was Futa Pass, and it was below him, clear as an aerial photograph, and there was heavy traffic on it moving in both directions. He knew the Germans were using the last of the darkness to reinforce their positions. The men were now all looking at what he saw, and one of them said, "We never had it so good," but this time nobody laughed.

He did not fire on the Germans, because he did not want to attract their attention sooner than necessary. He waited for what he knew must come.

It came. They had received three salvos before Jeff realized from the color of the smoke that a battery of his own 105s was zeroed in on his position.

He was counting his dead, and shouting for the morphine syrettes for the wounded when heavier stuff began to come in, and this time the smoke was brown and he knew he had got his platoon under bombardment from both armies. He lay on the ground, the concussions hurting his belly, and prayed that the men he had sent back with the prisoners would get back. It turned out, later, that the men

never did get back. They were never seen again, and were listed as MIA. Probably they were killed.

The bombardment grew worse. Steel fingers were tearing the hill apart, and digging for him—digging for him personally. For another hour they somehow lived, but by no means all of them lived. Jeff felt that each succeeding shell was creating a chemical change within him. He felt he would never leave this evil hill. He sent three more runners back, one at a time. Then the bombardment began to slacken. Jeff saw that the white and gray shells had moved on and were now breaking against the face of Altuzzo, but not on the road from which the German tanks and SP guns were firing.

He did not know that he was sobbing, and praying.

What finished him were the six heavy rockets, the *Nebelwürfe*, that fell around him. He was on his hands and knees when they came. The blast and concussion crushed him into the earth as a man's hand swats a fly.

After that he did not know anything until he awoke in the station hospital in Florence. They told him his men held the hill against a counter-attack, but this he did not remember. People called the little hill Baker's Peak, because it turned out to be important enough to deserve a name. People said we might not have got Futa Pass when we did, except for Baker's Peak.

Jeff stopped shaking after his two weeks in Rome. But for a long time a car's backfire, or the casual shooting that goes on in war even behind the lines, would send him face down and quivering in a ditch. So they made him a captain, and gave him a Silver Star, and attached him to Army HQ, which found good use for him as liaison officer with the 15th Air Force in Bari in the spring.

8

Of none of this could he speak, nor could he articulate his hatred of the insensate force that had pounded his will and courage from his body.

Major L'Engle understood all this very well, and he gave Jeff

another Blue Eighty-Eight, and watched him until he again was fully asleep.

The Major put his things back into his bag, and washed his hands. "I'll be back in the afternoon," he told Quigley. "If he gets wild, call me at the Mission."

"Very well," Quigley said.

Jeff Baker rolled over on his side, and for a moment words gushed out of his mouth, and then he relaxed and slept again.

"Poor boy," Quigley said.

"Yes," said the Major. "Poor boy. He has a wound that will not heal, and for which there is no Purple Heart."

CHAPTER TWELVE

1

JEFF RECOVERED QUICKLY, as the Major had predicted, but they made him stay in his room. When his hands stopped trembling without the sedation of the Blue Eighty-Eights, Major L'Engle told him he could soon get back to his work. "But don't step on any more starters," he warned, "and don't get shot at unless you can't help it."

Jeff said he wouldn't, and Major L'Engle asked him whether he'd like to try the narco-synthesis treatment, which might help him. The Major could get the necessary drugs shipped out from the States. Jeff asked the Major whether he thought it was necessary. The Major said it couldn't do any harm, and might do some good. "Of course," he admitted, "you're never likely to have a shock like that again, so you'll never black out again the way you did. But if there's another war, Baker, I wouldn't like to be you."

"If there's another war," Jeff said, "I wouldn't like to be you either." The Major laughed at that, and Jeff said he'd think it over. Privately, Jeff didn't believe any more treatment would be necessary. Somehow he believed he'd licked this thing. He didn't believe he'd ever be quite so afraid again. Man was superior to explosives. Man had made bombs, and if man so chose man could banish bombs from the earth. He was better than a bomb.

2

Everybody was nice. Almost everybody in the Legation came to see him, or sent flowers. Except the Admiral. Jeff wondered why

there was not so much as a note from the Admiral. Then Morgan Collingwood, the Consul General, dropped in on an afternoon, bringing with him a jar of Stateside jelly and some bouillon cubes.

Morgan Collingwood said he was glad to see Jeff was so much better. He said that as senior Foreign Service Officer on the post he would like to be sure that Jeff was comfortable, and safe, and if Jeff wished he could move into the Consul General's residence for a time. Jeff said this was very nice of Mr. Collingwood, and thoughtful, but he was perfectly comfortable here. Also, it was Quigley's opinion that the booby-trapping was an act of hooliganism, or general resentment, rather than a specific and deliberate attempt on his life. Jeff saw his chance to ask Morgan Collingwood about the Admiral. He tried to be casual, and remarked, "I haven't had any word from the Admiral."

Morgan Collingwood looked uncomfortable, as if his Herbert Hoover collar was suddenly a size too small. "It's most unfortunate about the Admiral," he said.

"What's unfortunate?" Jeff asked.

"Well, the way he looks at things. After a man has been shaped for four years at Annapolis, and forty more in the Navy, then he looks at things differently than we civilians."

"I don't get it, Mr. Collingwood." But Jeff could guess.

"Well, Baker, the Admiral isn't happy about your behavior. Do you want me to speak frankly?"

"I certainly do."

"The Admiral heard—from whom I don't know—that you did nothing to protect the woman you were escorting. He heard that you cowered in the street. Of course the Admiral hasn't said anything publicly or officially about his feelings. As a matter of fact he praised you at his press conference the other day. The Admiral called a special press conference. He wanted to be sure that a constructive version of the affair appeared in the press at home. But privately the Admiral is chagrined at your conduct."

Jeff tried to keep silent, but he couldn't. "That's too goddam bad," he burst out. "He can take one of his toy battleships and he can—"

"Now, now!" said Morgan Collingwood. "That sort of talk won't do you any good."

"No, of course not," Jeff said, "except it makes me feel better. Didn't Major L'Engle explain—didn't he explain to the Admiral?"

"Yes, he explained, but it only made it worse." Collingwood leaned over the bed as if what next he had to say was confidential. "You see, the Admiral said he didn't believe you'd had an injury in the war, because there was nothing in your record to show it. And anyway, he claims there isn't any such thing as combat fatigue. He quoted General Patton, and he said General Patton ought to know. Remember, Baker, I'm only telling you what the Admiral said. This isn't necessarily my opinion. As a matter of fact it is not in accord with my own feelings. He said combat fatigue was only malingering, or cowardice."

"Well, he can have his opinion," Jeff said, "and I'll have mine."

"Now that's being sensible," said Morgan Collingwood. "Just continue doing your job, and say nothing about it, and I'm quite sure he'll get over it. I understand you received a decoration. It might be a good idea to wear it at our next formal function—I think we're entertaining the French and British in a few weeks."

"You mean one of those little enamel dingbats?"

"Yes, a little pin for your lapel."

"I don't know where mine is," Jeff said. "I'm not sure I packed it."

He didn't say he had never worn it, because he could never be certain he had the right to wear the Silver Star.

3

He received cards from most of the Missions in Budapest, but none from the Russians, the Jugs, the Bulgars, or the other satellites. The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent him a stilted, insincere note of regret.

He received two cables. The one from Horace Locke said:

RELIEVED HEAR YOU NOT BADLY INJURED STOP WOULD APPRE-
CIATE LETTER.

Jeff felt guilty because he had not written to Horace Locke, and a little foolish for not having thought of him as a confidant, now in this time when he needed an utterly reliable friend in the Department. Should he confide Leonides' conspiratorial plans to Horace Locke? Could Horace Locke get to the Secretary, if necessary?

He should imagine that Horace Locke could get to the Secretary. After all, Locke had once been a Chief of Division, and an important man in the Department.

He thought Horace Locke might be his man. There was about Horace Locke an almost Biblical aura of unswerving decency and righteousness. Just like his father.

But there was the difficulty of secure communications with Locke.

It would be so much easier if he could tell someone in Budapest. The Admiral he must count out, now. Morgan Collingwood, he feared, would be shocked because it was unorthodox and without precedent. Collingwood might be frightened into blating it through the whole Department, or freezing it forever inside himself. Quincy Todd and William Quigley were reliable, he was certain, but they would have difficulty in conveying the information to the high quarters where it could be evaluated and a decision reached. Perhaps Fred Keller was the man. He had brains, imagination, and he was top level. But in Leonides' words, he did not know Keller's insides.

The other cable said:

DISMAYED HEAR OF ATTEMPT ON YOUR LIFE STOP JEFF PLEASE
PLEASE DONT LET ANYTHING HAPPEN STOP AM WRITING FULLY
LOVE

SUSAN

This cable worried him, and yet in a way it made him feel good. She had committed herself entirely. She wasn't just shocked. She was dismayed. He had become part of someone else.

4

Every afternoon when she was not rehearsing Rikki came to see him. Sometimes she brought flowers, and sometimes books from her own library, books printed in the United States, their pages limp from much handling. Some, like *Look Homeward, Angel*, had been published twenty years before; Jeff had read it but it was good to read again. She wondered why no new American books could ever be seen in the stalls, and Jeff explained to her that in this new kind of war books were considered weapons. They were time bombs planted in the minds of men. Wherever the Soviet controlled, American books were dangerous, and were if possible exterminated.

She came to see him on his last day in bed. He marveled at her chic, her smartness. She wore a blue suit labeled Fifth Avenue but without a Fifth Avenue label. She told him it was an American Army blanket, traded in the black market in Vienna, smuggled across the frontier, sold at a fantastic price in Budapest, and then cleverly dyed and cut by men who loved their craft, and who would use all their skill on blanket wool, for it was the best material available. He wouldn't believe it. She took his hand and made him feel the cloth.

"It is blanket," he admitted. "It's amazing." He took his hand away.

He was sitting up in bed, with the pillows piled behind him, and wore a robe of white toweling. She leaned towards him, and plucked at the threads of the robe. "This matter of which we were speaking," she said. "This matter over which we quarreled—"

"What about it?"

"I will do what you want me to do, Jeff."

"That's fine, Rikki."

"Anything you want, I will do."

"There isn't anything to do right now. I just wanted to know how you felt." He knew what she meant.

Then she sat up straight, her head resting exactly on her straight spine, in the manner of dancers. "Every time I think I understand you Americans," she said, "I find I am mistaken. The ones with wives and four children far away across an ocean, they will chase me. They will tell me they will divorce their wives and forget their children for me, which of course I do not believe but that is what they will say. But you, who have no wife, you hesitate, you shake—look at your hands—you have disturbances of the brain, you have a churning inside you. What is wrong, you Jeff? What is this woman you have back there?"

"She's just a girl."

"What is her name?"

"Susan."

"Susan." Rikki considered the sound. "So plain."

"She isn't plain. She's very complicated."

"And all the time you are here, she expects you to have no other woman?"

"I don't think so, she's very liberal, and broad-minded."

Rikki smiled, and showed the tip of her tongue between her teeth. "I would like to meet that Susan!" she said. It was afternoon by the clock, but the night comes fast in Budapest's winter, and the darkness had come.

Soon Rikki would leave, and he would be alone, and lonely with the loneliness of one who is hurt and far from home, the deep double loneliness of the traveler in a strange city and the alien in a foreign land. He said, "Rikki, come here."

She said, "Wait." She turned off his bed lamp, and in the blackness he could hear the rustle of her clothes, and then he felt her weight upon the bed.

5

Jeff was up and dressed when Major L'Engle came in the morning. The Major gave him the usual examination, and then he told Jeff to hold out his hands, palms up. Jeff held out his hands, and

the Major laid a newspaper across them. The edges of the paper did not tremble.

"You've progressed a long way in twenty-four hours," the Major said. "All of a sudden, you're completely relaxed. Haven't taken any drugs, or anything, have you?"

"Oh, no," Jeff said.

"You look fine."

"I feel fine."

"I didn't think you'd be this relaxed in a month."

"Didn't you?"

"No. You can go out of the house today. Take a little walk. Not too far. Your legs will be a little wobbly. You can go to work tomorrow."

"Good."

Major L'Engle put on his muffler and overcoat, and felt in his coat pocket. "Almost forgot. I brought your mail from the Legation." He brought out a fat packet of airmail, compressed by rubber bands. "These ought to keep you busy a while. You must have a lot of friends back home."

6

Jeff opened them, starting from the top, with the impatient eagerness of a small boy tearing through a pile of Christmas presents. There were a surprising number of letters from people he didn't know. Most of them were warm and sympathetic. They wanted him to know that the people back home were behind him. If worse came to worst, the Reds would be paid back tenfold for every injury and insult to an American. They hoped for his speedy recovery.

There were others who wanted to know what he was doing wasting the taxpayers' money gallivanting around with a Hungarian actress. If he got killed, he probably deserved it.

Three letters, from women, enclosed photographs, and suggested that what he needed was a good, wholesome American girl. Would he correspond with them?

There were letters, and cards, from old friends in the 339th. They wondered what had ever become of him, and hadn't he had his bellyful of war?

There was a forgotten bill, a year overdue, from a Washington flower shop, with a curt note saying, "We see by the papers that you are in Budapest. Unless this account is settled, it will be referred to your employers."

There were two notes from strangers requesting small loans.

There was a letter from Susan.

"Dear Jeff—

"I was in New State cafeteria, having my coffee before the nine o'clock conference, when I saw your picture looking at me from the front page of *The Post*, and all I could see in the headline was the word, 'bomb,' and for a long time I didn't dare read it. I thought, 'This can't happen to me—not twice in a lifetime.'

"But I hear from Gertrude Kerns—she's my friend in the Balkans Division—that a dispatch came in saying you were getting along fine, and would soon be back on your feet. Thank God! Oh, please, Jeff, be careful!

"I am enclosing clippings from *The Post*, *Times-Herald*, *Star*, and *News*. What really happened? Every story is different. Who was responsible?

"You will notice that the *T-H* has a photograph of that Hungarian actress, Rikki something-or-other. She looks sort of slinky. I'd never trust a person with eyes like that—man or woman. Now don't get the idea that I'm questioning you about her, because I'm not.

"Jeff, you know we didn't do much talking about us. We never had time. I don't know when we ever will have time. Judging from the news, time is running out on us.

"Terrible things could happen, Jeff. If it came, you might be captured and interned. That would be a terrible thing, but bearable. I would wait for you, dear. But with so much violence already, who can say whether anyone will pay any attention to the laws of war, and the Geneva Convention, this time?

"Remember how fearful I was? How afraid I was to have you?

Now I have changed. I want you, while time remains. I think of the line from Omar: 'The Bird of Time has but a little way to flutter—and the Bird is on the wing.' I find I'm beginning to agree with Omar now.

"I am going to make a suggestion. I don't know whether you will like it or not. It is by no means a *démarche*. If you do not agree, I will still be here. I will always be here for you.

"Jeff, I am afraid there is nothing left for you to do. We both feel the same way, dear, but there is nothing either of us can do. All the words have been said at Lake Success (what an ironic name for the place) and all the speeches have been broadcast, and all the notes sent and rejected, and all the treaties made and broken.

"I despair.

"And so, Jeff, I suggest that you resign from the Department and come to me.

Come to me, Jeff,

Susan."

He put the letter with the others on the leather-topped Italian desk, and yanked his overcoat out of the closet. He felt that he must get away from that letter. Why had she written it? Why had she put into hard, clear, written words what he dared not even think? And anyway he felt like a heel and wanted to get out of the room. Logically he shouldn't have a conscience about Rikki because he had only done what any other man would do if he had the chance. Yet he did feel ashamed. Susan's letter made him ashamed and he needed to get away from it.

7

Outside, he turned to the right on Revay Utca and walked towards St. Stephen's. He stopped before the butcher shop to look at the rabbits and hares dangling head down from the hooks in the window. Every day the smell of rabbit goulash oozed under his door from Madame Angell's kitchen, and when he looked at the rabbits

he could still smell it. Rabbit had become the staple meat of the city. The Hungarians said it was better than the year before. Last year rabbits had been scarce.

He tried to push Susan's letter out of his mind, and consider the economics of food. The rabbits were in the window because there was a schism between farm and city in Hungary. There were many schisms in the world, and each new one seemed to open another crack in the elaborate machinery of civilization, like chain reaction. They all stemmed from the primary schism between East and West. Hungary was of the East. Its forint was no good in the West. Its forint could not buy anything outside its own borders. Would the British and Americans accept forints for automobiles, and tractors, and machine tools, and blankets? Of course not. The canny Hungarian farmers did not trust the forint. The farmer wanted only enough forints to buy what could be bought inside Hungary, and this was not much. It was no use hoarding or saving forints. Remember what had happened to the pengo? It was better to hoard the solid things that come out of the ground. So the farmers sent to Budapest only what they were compelled to send. They held as much as they could. It was said there was more grain buried under the barns of the *holds* than ever came to the city. Like everyone else in the world, the Hungarian farmers were looking out for themselves. Because in Moscow there were secluded, badly informed, frightened men possessed of a mad vision, and in other capitals were small men of small vision and perhaps equal fear, because of this he had to walk around Budapest smelling rabbit.

It was all sort of crazy. It was as if the inmates of an asylum had locked up their keepers and formed a bureaucracy. And it could get worse. When war came—if war came—it would be like a football game played with Schmeisser machine pistols. At the end of the game all the players would be dead, most of the spectators would have holes in them, and the score would still be 0-0. Perhaps, as some of his friends hopefully predicted, they wouldn't use atomic weapons, or germs, just as in the last war they hadn't used gas. Well, in that case the war wouldn't settle anything. It would be

like playing without putting in the first string team. It would simply mean that it would be necessary to play the game all over again.

If it was going to happen, it would be the smart thing not to go up that hill. It would be smart, while time remained, to resign and have what fun he could. And his mind was back to Susan's letter again.

8

He saw St. Stephen's enormous dome looming above him, and in a way it reminded him of the Capitol, for the dome was almost as tall and just as massive. He knew, then, that he was going to go into St. Stephen's. He had not been inside a church, to pray, for a long time. He had visited the abbey at Cassino, which had seemed like a planned Roman ruin with its skeleton whitened by two weeks of shellfire and bombs instead of two thousand years of weather. He had looked at quite a few ruined churches, and he had used two or three as O.P.s. But he had not been inside a church to pray for, oh, twelve or fourteen years. St. Stephen's wasn't his church. He was Presbyterian. But it was the nearest church and he needed to pray inside a church.

The climb up the marble entrance left his knees watery, although there were not many steps. Inside he paused to remove his hat, and found that as usual he had forgotten his hat. He walked to the central pillars, and examined the statue of Saint Ladislaus. He felt self-conscious, but no one was watching.

He walked towards a side altar and there were backless wooden benches before the altar, all unoccupied, for this was not an hour of Mass. He became aware of the quiet, the peace. There was a murmur inside St. Stephen's, there was even music from the other side of the nave, and yet it was wonderfully quiet, and he drank gratefully of this quiet.

He did not know how long he had been there when he heard the creak of a man's shoes coming down the aisle behind him, and was aware that somebody moved towards him along his bench. He thought, with all the other benches, why does he have to come here. In the soft light he was aware that the man knelt and crossed himself. He turned his head, and said, "Good Lord!"

"Shh!" said Leonides.

"Don't do that to me!" Jeff said.

"That bomb did your nerves no good, eh, Jeff?"

"I'll say not," he managed to whisper.

"Yes, keep your voice low. We will attract no attention, praying here, unless we make noise."

"What about the bomb?" Jeff asked. "Who did it?"

"Not us. The MVD was concerned because of it. They have orders not to unbalance things here. Not now. The situation is too tense. He is not quite ready. He will carefully choose his time, but the time, I am afraid, is short. We must somehow begin our operations. We must somehow divert Him."

From the other end of St. Stephen's there rose the chant of a choir. "Is that why you came here?" Jeff asked. "How did you know I was here anyway?"

"I have been watching. This is the third day I have been watching. It is important for you."

"You mean your operations? Sure it's important."

"No, there is something more immediate. This girl, Telredy, who comes to see you—do you like her?"

"Yes, I like her. Why?"

"Then do not see her again. Never again see her."

"Why shouldn't I see her?"

"Because if you see her, she will die. Your Atlantis Project is known, Jeff. It is known that you are in it. Any Hungarian who you often see will, sooner or later, die or wish he were dead."

Jeff had the queerest feeling, as if he and Leonides had been through this before. He looked at Leonides, sitting on the bench beside him, his big hands clasped, his round, cropped head bent. And when he looked he made a conscious effort to control his own features, and the effort made him realize that this was like the poker games in the Oriente. "What kind of project?" he said. "I don't understand you, Leonides."

Leonides half turned his head to meet Jeff's eyes. "You don't?"

"No."

"You are a bad liar, Jeff."

"That may be," Jeff said. "But I remember you are a good liar. I'd like to have a nickel for every pot you pulled in with a busted straight."

The chant died away, so that when Leonides spoke next it was only a whisper. "I am not bluffing, Jeff. If you think I am bluffing, continue with this Atlantis Project and see what injuries are caused. But do not continue, Jeff. Stop it quickly. I do not ask you to say yes, or no, only listen to what I have to say. The MVD knows of it all. The MVD knows that Keller is at the top, and you and a number of others below. I don't know the MVD source exactly. I know it is from the United States, and probably from the White Russian colony in the United States. It is easy for the MVD to operate among White Russians. The Communists and their followers your FBI automatically suspects. The White Russians your FBI automatically trusts. Your FBI forgets that often the White Russians have primary interests in their motherland—family, estates, sweet-hearts. And a Russian is a Russian. The Germans learned that. They learned it when we emptied our political prisons, and formed the prisoners into divisions, and sent them to Stalingrad. The political prisoners fought well. They hated Him, but they loved Russia more."

"Shhh," Jeff said. A robed priest walked towards the altar, and did not glance at them.

"It is all right," said Leonides. "It is not unknown for a Russian to empty his sins in church."

Jeff said, "I have listened to what you had to say, Leonides. Now what about your operations? What's cooking?"

"We are fearful for Yassovsky. He was sent to the Crimea from Moscow, and we have not heard from him since."

"Anything else?"

"Our radio is set. We have it in a truck in the Hochschwab. You know the Hochschwab?"

"The mountains in the British Zone in Austria? Yes. I've driven across the Semmering."

"Not even the British patrol the Hochschwab. It will be safe for quite a time. It will do more harm to Him than all your wireless, and the BBC. We will call it RFR—Radio Free Russia."

"How soon can I tell my Department?"

Leonides bent his head until his heavy chin touched his chest, and he appeared deep in prayer. His lips moved. "Soon now, please God." Then he asked, "Have you yet told your one person?"

"Not yet."

"Who will he be? I should know, if anything happens to you. Remember, something almost did happen, Jeff."

Now, Jeff knew, he must decide. "Would Keller be all right?" he said.

The choir began a new chant, and Leonides raised his head and stared at the great painting of St. Stephen, offering a crown to the Virgin, over the altar. Jeff knew that Leonides was searching the files of his mind for what he knew of Keller. He was going through all the reports. He was evaluating intelligence. At last he said, "I do not think it should be Keller, Jeff. At first, one thinks Keller would be the right man. He is discreet. Until this information came from the United States, the MVD could discover nothing about his mission here. He is intelligent. For one his age he has risen fast in your Department. He has no vices, and no weaknesses. Perhaps that is why I do not like him. He is not quite human, and this news is for a human man, Jeff, a man of compassion."

"Very well," Jeff said, "I will tell someone else. I'll tell Horace Locke, back in Washington."

"You can communicate with him in secret?" Leonides repeated aloud, "Horace Locke."

"I'll find a way."

The priest walked back from the altar, and this time he looked at the two men silent on the bench, and smiled. It was a strange thing, an unprecedented thing, to see a Russian and an American side by side in St. Stephen's. He prayed for peace each day at this altar. Who could tell, perhaps his prayers were being answered?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1

WHEN JEFF GOT BACK to his room he fell across the bed. The short walk, and the hour spent in St. Stephen's with Leonides, had tired him. In the morning he had been perfectly calm, but now his fingers tingled and the muscles in his arms and legs jumped at disconcerting intervals. He forced calmness upon himself. He had to think—think with logic and without emotion—think of Susan, think of Rikki and her danger, of the compromising of Atlantis Project, and of Leonides and his conspiracy.

He buried his face in the pillow, as if by shutting out the light his brain would become accustomed to the darkness of the future and peer through the darkness. But his brain wouldn't operate properly. His imagination insisted on racing ahead of his logic, like a child breaking away from its mother, and pursuing the fleeting ghosts of possibility. Suppose Leonides was an *agent provocateur*, loyal to the MVD and the Politburo. Suppose Leonides was cunningly pumping him to confirm nebulous MVD information? His instinct and his judgment told him Leonides was an honest and decent man, but his imagination shouted beware. Suppose Rikki was in the pay of the MVD, or of the Hungarian secret police? Suppose the leak about Atlantis was not in America, but here in Budapest? He fell asleep when his mind, lost in the labyrinth of possibilities, curled up in exhaustion.

2

When he awoke he knew from the sun that it was afternoon. Rikki was there with a bowl of soup from Madame Angell's kitchen. "Look what I brought you," she said. "I hear this morning at the Legation that you are much better. Perhaps I cured you, no?"

"Hello, Rikki," he said, swinging his legs off the bed and shaking the sleep from his head. Now he must act. He must act at once and decisively, so there would be no mistake. "Thanks for the soup, Rikki. It was very thoughtful of you. I'm hungry and I'll eat it. But put it down on the table and get out of here, Rikki. I can't see you again."

He observed the impact of his words on her face. He was saying it the wrong way. Her mouth opened, and her eyes were dark and wet with pity. "Jeff," she said, "what is wrong? You are sick again?"

"Rikki, it's dangerous for you to be here. I can't explain it all, but you'll have to get out. Right now. Go on now, Rikki."

She put the soup down on the table so that it slopped over the rim of the bowl. "What kind of man are you!"

"This is for your own good, Rikki."

She saw the pile of opened letters on the desk. "Now I see," she said. "Now I see." She smiled as if nothing was funny. "My Jeff has a letter from his Susan. He has remorse. You Americans, you are funny. Not funny ha-ha. Funny peculiar. The happier you are the bigger your conscience."

"Nothing of the sort," Jeff said. He was on the defensive. This was going badly.

"Last night were you thinking of your Susan?" she demanded.

He stood up, and tried to say what he had to say quietly, without affront or anger. "Rikki, this isn't a matter of Susan. This is you, Rikki. This is your life."

She came close to him, and her hands touched his chest and crept up to his shoulders. "You Jeff! You silly! I understand. This

Susan, she is no doubt a lovely girl. And you can go back to her, Jeff. I will not hold you. I want nothing from you, Jeff—nothing. I only wish to give. When you go back you can have your Susan. I will even talk of her with you, without jealousy. I know how you Americans like to talk of your women. I will look at her pictures. I will agree that she is pretty. But now, while you are here, you will have me."

Jeff took her hands in his hands, and thought how helpless they seemed in his hands, and said, slowly so there could be no misunderstanding, "You would not do me much good as a corpse."

Her expression changed. He had frightened her. She didn't say anything. She was beginning to understand.

"You can't come up here any more, Rikki. We can't meet anywhere any more. You should not go to Fred Keller's again. You should not eat or dance at the Park Club. You should never enter the Legation."

She lowered her head, and said, "Why not" but she said it as if she already knew the answer.

"Americans are poison for you, Rikki." He thought, this is the worst thing I've ever done in my life. This is the worst. America had been the important dream of her life, and he was excising that dream. He was banishing her. He was creating an exile in her own land. It was like giving her a lift, and then dumping her off in the desert.

"This thing of which we talked?" she asked, without raising her head. "This Hungarian maquis? Cannot I be in that?" It was as if a little girl had been ordered to take off her party dress because she was not welcome at the dance. and who begs at least to be allowed to serve in the kitchen.

He knew that as soon as he talked to Keller there wouldn't be any Atlantis Project. "No. You'll have to forget that."

"So you have given up, you Americans?"

"I have given up that idea. Can't you guess why? Can't you guess why I can't see you any more? Why you shouldn't be seen around any Americans?"

"Yes, I know. But it is very discouraging, Jeff. I am sick. I am empty. You know, all my life was with your people. I thought I was one of you. Now I am alone." She turned away from him, and went out into the hallway, and presently he heard her footfall on the stairs, and the diminishing sound was slow and heavy, and not that of a dancer.

3

Jeff looked at the soup. He was no longer hungry. Then he realized he must see Fred Keller at once. He should have called Fred before he fell asleep. His carelessness disturbed him. How many other lives besides Rikki's were in danger he did not know. He did not know how many others in the Legation were working on Atlantis Project, or who they were, or how many Hungarians might be suspected, and under observation of the MVD and Rajk's outfit.

He picked up the telephone. When the operator heard his voice she shifted him to another operator, who spoke English, and at the same time he heard a tiny, annoying hum. When he spoke again there was a hollow reflection to his voice. The call was being monitored. This was S.O.P. Everyone in the Legation assumed that all their calls would be monitored. But Jeff hated it. The intrusion on his privacy enraged him, so that sometimes he shouted horrid things into the phone when he knew the call was being recorded. He knew this was indiscreet and not according to the rules, but it relieved his feelings.

Since it was assumed that all calls were overheard, conversations were always oblique, monosyllabic, or rich in slang peculiar to this one Mission in this one nation at this time in history.

When Fred answered the phone Jeff said, "It's me."

"Hi-ya?"

"Okay. I've got to see you."

"I'm pretty well tied up."

"Got to see you right away."

"You can't. I've got appointments with Lower Slobbovians all

afternoon, and I expect Miss Genghis Khan for dinner." Lower Slobbovians were Hungarians.

Jeff said, "No she's not."

"Why not?"

"She's sick and can't get well." That meant that she was suspected by the MVD.

"Oh. That's too bad. Yes, you'd better come up at eight."

"That's not all," Jeff said.

"What else?"

"Wait until you hear. You should see me right now."

"I can't. That's all there is to it."

And then Keller hung up.

4

For Jeff the waiting until eight o'clock was painful. To be a bearer of bad news was unpleasant enough, but to have to do it by appointment was intolerable. He tried reading the Toynbee he'd borrowed from the Mission information library a month before. The history of civilizations had stirred and fascinated him, and at the same time had awed and humbled him with realization of his own ignorance. A future Toynbee would be able to dismiss his century and all its wars and hatreds and mass aberrations simply as a Time of Troubles, to be measured in the space of man's full journey upon the planet only as a single step backward in unnumbered miles of progress. If you absorbed Toynbee you became a philosopher. Yet he found himself rebelling against his own conclusions. He didn't want to admit that he was fated to live in a bad time. He didn't want to admit the inevitability of the descent of his time into darkness.

He found he was pleased with himself because in this moment he could concentrate on Toynbee.

At six-thirty Madame Angell brought him a tray, and the latest news. The BBC quoted Drew Pearson, whom Madame Angell called "your spokesman," as saying the Russians would soon be able to har-

ness cosmic rays, and cosmic rays would kill more people quicker than atomic bombs, biological warfare, or radioactive clouds. Radio Moscow said a Trotskyite plot had been crushed in the Ukraine. This sounded more factual, and potentially as interesting. A Stockholm dispatch to Berne quoted travelers from Finland as saying the Reds were testing trans-polar V-2 rockets. That wasn't unlikely. The uranium production in the Czech mines in Bohemia had doubled since the Russians placed German engineers in charge. He didn't doubt it.

He forced himself to eat. His stomach protested each mouthful, but he made himself eat because he needed strength.

It may have been the food's impact on his raw nerves, or the uranium, or the cosmic rays, or simply the tension of waiting. Jeff's hands began to shake again. With both hands he had difficulty lifting his coffee to his lips. He knew that in this condition he shouldn't see Fred. Fred would think he had gone to pieces. He telephoned the dispensary and asked for Major L'Engle. He wasn't there. He tried L'Engle's house, and the Park Club, and the mess. He wasn't at any of those places.

Jeff put on his overcoat and went outside. The walk and the air should help him. It should untangle his guts. He turned towards the Szabadzag-tér, with its old monuments to the four lost provinces—and the new one to the Red Army towering over them. The dispensary was on the second floor of the Mission. Maybe he'd find L'Engle there now. He hoped so. He needed him.

At this hour—it was seven o'clock now—the Mission was usually empty except for the doorman and guards and charwomen and the people in the code room and radio monitoring section. He went up to the second floor and tried the door of the dispensary. It was open, and the lights were on inside, but L'Engle wasn't there.

He sat on a white metal stool and tried to read a month-old copy of *Newsweek*. The type kept jumping out of focus. He wished L'Engle would hurry up and come back. He looked up at the rows of square bottles on the shelves. Probably better stocked than any hospital in all Pest, he thought. His eyes stopped at the bottle of

Blue Eighty-Eights. There was no mistaking them, and the label was plain—Sodium Amytal.

He wanted one of those Blue Eighty-Eights.

Maybe L'Engle would be out for another hour. Maybe L'Engle wasn't coming back at all. He couldn't wait.

Jeff slid off the stool and reached up and took the bottle of Blue Eighty-Eights and Miss Ellis, the nurse, opened the door and said, "Put that down, God-dammit!"

Miss Ellis had had a hard day. As a matter of fact Miss Ellis had had a hard year. She had volunteered for overseas duty in the belief that she would find a husband, for certainly the American men in such an unlikely place as Budapest would appreciate an old-fashioned American girl, even if she was a bit thick through the middle and in the ankles. She found she was mistaken. The competition was rougher than in New York, or St. Louis, or Omaha. It was even rougher than in her home town, Hyannis, Nebraska, where the slim and pretty girls outnumbered the eligible males two to one. It looked as if she would never find a husband in Budapest—unless she married a Hungarian anxious to emigrate—and she had developed a grudge against the men in the Mission.

And here was one of them—Baker who had never even asked her to dance—stealing her drugs. He was standing there looking at her with his mouth open, caught red-handed. A filthy hophead. "So you're the thief who's been taking my morphine and penicillin!" Miss Ellis said.

"Now wait a minute, Miss Ellis," Jeff said. "I just came up here to find Major L'Engle and get a Blue Eighty-Eight. I need it and I know he'd give me one if he was here."

"Put that down!" Miss Ellis tried to get her hands on the bottle.

He saw that there wasn't any sense arguing with her, and he turned his back so she could not interfere and shook out a Blue Eighty-Eight and popped it into his mouth and swallowed.

"Why, you filthy thief!" Miss Ellis spat at him.

He couldn't answer because he was having a hard time swallowing.

"I hope they put you in Leavenworth for ten years. You'll never get away with this, you know. Why, it's the most brazen thing I've ever seen!"

He got it down, but it still felt like a lump under his breastbone. "All right, Miss Ellis," Jeff said, "just take it easy. When you see L'Engle tell him I came up here and took one Blue Eighty-Eight. Just one, mind you! And I don't think you talk like a lady, Miss Ellis."

He hurried out. It was quicker to walk to the motor pool than call and wait for a vehicle. If he walked right over he'd be at Keller's on time.

5

Miss Ellis didn't scream, because there wasn't anyone on the floor to hear her, and anyway Miss Ellis wasn't the screaming type.

She sat down at the desk in the dispensary and began to write a report for Major L'Engle. She tore it up and started again, this time addressing it to the Admiral. For months she had complained to L'Engle that the drugs were being stolen. You could get a thousand dollars, counting the forint at par, for 300,000 units of penicillin—enough for one Romansky shot—on the Black Bourse. Also she was sure some morphine was missing. When she had beefed about this, Major L'Engle hadn't paid proper attention to her. Sometimes she even suspected L'Engle. She'd bet he'd been passing out her drugs to the indigenous personnel. She's seen Major L'Engle with some very pretty indigenous personnel. It was absolutely forbidden to allot the medical stores to the indigenous personnel. Now that she had something definite to squawk about she might as well squawk to the Admiral himself and get the whole thing off her chest. Maybe next time—if he was still here—Major L'Engle would pay some attention to her. She made her report hot. She concluded it with:

"In my professional opinion Mr. Baker behaved like a drug addict crazed by an uncontrollable desire for narcotics."

When Jeff walked into Keller's apartment he found Fred at ease in a maroon lounging robe, the faultless lapels faced with black satin. Fred was smoking a pipe and there was a brandy snifter and an open book on the table beside his big chair. He was wearing horn-rimmed glasses. Jeff had never seen him with glasses before. He seemed like a man whose thoughts were only on a book and an undisturbed evening, until you looked closely at his face. Then you saw all the muscles were taut, and new lines showed around the mouth. "Hello, Jeff," he said. "Do you want to eat first, or talk?"

"I've eaten, thanks," Jeff said. "I think we'd better talk."

"I haven't any appetite, myself," Keller said. "My man ran up some chops for me. Wasn't able to touch them. Now what's this all about?"

"Your butler still here?" Jeff asked.

"No. I sent him home."

"All right," Jeff said, "here goes." He folded himself into a chair and lighted a cigarette. He was relieved to see the Blue Eighty-Eight had dispatched his jitters. "Atlantis Project has been penetrated. The Russians know about it. We've had it, Fred."

Keller's tan faded to yellow. "How do you know?"

"A Russian told me."

"I don't believe you!"

So Jeff told him the story. He started in the beginning at Bari. He told him everything, but he did not mention Leonides' own secret. He didn't mention Leonides' anti-regime resistance movement. He was still mindful of Leonides' warning.

As he talked he became aware of a change in Keller's expression. The unnatural calm vanished. Jeff thought, he's taking this terribly hard. The penetration of Atlantis was a blow, yes. But it could be infinitely worse. At least the project, in this stage, could be called off without catastrophe. The friends of the Western powers here

would not be compromised. Henceforth the MVD would waste its men and its time watching a scheme that no longer existed.

7

What Jeff could not know, of course, was that for Keller the news was the most terrible of personal disasters. Keller had staked his career on Atlantis, and his career was his whole life. There was nothing else.

Keller's career had been happy from the beginning. The Department delighted and fascinated him. In the intricate supra-world of diplomacy everyone was polite and gracious, and culture and breeding were understood and welcome. The world that was sordid and violent and treacherous was another world with which he had severed contact. The Department was made for him. It provided the catharsis for all his energy.

He was lucky in the Department. He was lucky enough to get in on the ground floor when the New Deal came. His basic political, social, and economic beliefs were superficial, but he found it easy to get along with the men who came into power with the New Deal. For one thing, under the New Deal the Department expanded and increased in importance, and Fred liked that.

He was lucky to get the Berlin assignment. In Berlin one could see the way the wind was blowing and judge what was to come. His reports on Nazi ambitions went to the very highest levels. He was promoted to Second Secretary before he was thirty, and sent to Budapest. After that there was Bucharest, Paris, and Istanbul.

After Pearl Harbor he was brought home. He worked on the North African desk in Washington, an assignment involving the greatest discretion and secrecy. When Paris was captured he was one of the Department's team sent to reorganize the American Embassy. He remained overseas for the duration of the war, and became a FSO, Class I. From this springboard there was no limit to where he could go. He could become an Ambassador, an Assistant Secretary, perhaps even the Undersecretary of State.

Fred was one of the first to recognize and analyze the Soviet danger. He had developed a finely tuned perception of public opinion, and he early forecast Russian designs in the Balkans, Germany, Austria, France, and Italy. He was the first man to make a study of the parallels between Soviet expansion and the Haushofer theory that had been Nazi dogma. It was a startling document.

By the beginning of 1948 he was climbing steeply up that perilous incline that separates those who make national policy from those who only carry it out. He was no longer one of the Department's "bright young men." He had become an adviser to those at the top. Soon he would be at the top himself.

It was Fred Keller who conceived the Atlantis Project. As a model and precedent (should anyone be squeamish about using such tactics in preparing for war) he had Bob Murphy's operations in North Africa. Murphy's Consuls and Vice-Consuls had worked among the Vichy French in much the same way Keller's team now worked among the Hungarians.

It had not been easy to sell Atlantis to the Department. It had been necessary to use all his persuasion, and stake all his influence. There were doubtful ones. Some felt Atlantis might commit the Department too far. It was in the nature of a military operation, and a military operation is not a flexible thing. Once started, it is difficult to stop, as every commander knows at H-Hour. There were others who said it was premature, and some who complained it was too late. A few even questioned its usefulness, but these were of little importance.

He had found a powerful ally in Matson. Matson claimed Atlantis was essential immediately, not only in his own area, but throughout Europe. It was Matson who had nominated Hungary for the experiment, and suggested that Fred take charge in the field. So Fred had told the Secretary he would assume full responsibility.

If he failed—but failure was not possible. He could not face the Secretary with a failure of such magnitude. Atlantis had to be successful. He had to prove to them all that he was a successful man.

Keller's pipe was out when Jeff finished talking, but he was still puffing at it. He looked at Jeff, estimating, analyzing, searching. He said, "Well, it's not as bad as I thought. I really don't see any reason to discontinue Atlantis."

"You don't!" Jeff didn't think he'd heard correctly.

"No, I don't. But I do see reasons why if what you told me became known—say, to the Admiral—you'd be fired. I'm surprised, Jeff, that a man of your background and experience should fall into such an ancient trap. I'm honestly surprised."

"Are you sure you listened carefully to what I told you?" Jeff asked.

"I digested every word. I'm only worried about one thing. How much did you leak to the Russian?"

Jeff knew he was growing angry. "Leak to the Russian! Nothing, of course."

"I hope not. I wouldn't like to lose you, Jeff. I think you've been doing a good job, except for this one thing."

"But don't you see that this one thing finishes us?" Jeff demanded.

"You *are* dense," Keller said. He rose and paced to the bar, and poured a measured ounce of brandy into the fat-bellied glass. He swished it around, and warmed the snifter with his long-sinewed hands. He seemed to have forgotten to offer a drink to Jeff.

"Don't you see?" Keller continued. "Don't you honestly? Don't you see that the Russians are on a fishing expedition? Oh, they may know something. They may even know the name of our project, although I honestly don't see how they'd even know that."

"It seems to me that they know everything," Jeff said, "and they picked it all up right in Washington."

"That's ridiculous. As I said, they may have heard the name. So they assign this chap—what's his name?"

"Leonides Lasenko."

"They assign your friend Lasenko to pump you. Why did they

pick you, and not me, or one of the others? First of all, you're fresh out here, and obviously don't know enough to stay away from Russians. And secondly, Lasenko knew you. That's the important thing. Lasenko got your name from customs, and he recognized it, and went after you. Perhaps you were the only approachable American in Budapest."

"I'm sure of that, anyway," Jeff said. He wanted desperately to tell Keller the rest of it. He wanted to tell how Leonides felt, and what Leonides was doing. But if Keller believed Leonides was lying about the MVD penetrating Atlantis, then Keller would also say Leonides was lying about the rest of it. Keller would only say Leonides was very clever. Keller would say Leonides was trying to get Jeff's confidence by pretending to be a member of an anti-regime revolutionary group. And Keller's reasoning would sound logical. That was the hell of it. It was all so perfectly logical. There was no use saying any more.

"Now I'll tell you what I'm going to do," Keller said, and Jeff could see he was composed again. "You're just to forget about this whole thing and let me handle it. You're not to mention it to anyone else. You're just to forget about it. And nothing is going to happen to you, except for God's sake, Jeff, don't see that Russian again."

Jeff was silent, but he knew what presently he was going to say.

"Yes, I'll handle it all," Keller went on. "I'll change the name of the project. If the Russians have heard anything about Atlantis, and are trying to find out what it is, we'll just eliminate the name."

"It won't work," Jeff said. "They're not watching a name. They're watching people."

"Nonsense. I'll just tell the Admiral it's best for security that we change the name. Time we changed it, as a security measure, anyway. You go right ahead with your work. How're you getting along with Miss Genghis Khan?"

Jeff said, "I'm not going to see her again, and you're not going to see her again."

"Now Jeff, don't be difficult."

Jeff leaned back in his chair. He was quiet and calm now, and it wasn't the Blue Eighty-Eight that had given him this steadiness. "It's easy for you, Keller," he said. "You know the Russians won't kill you. You're safe, because if you were killed that'd be an incident, and at this time they don't want such an incident. But if they grab Rikki, and snaffle out her life, that doesn't hurt you, Keller. Back home the papers will just mention that the Hungarian police arrested a Hungarian girl, and there was a closed trial, and she was hung for treason. And all you would say would be, 'Too bad.'"

"That's enough, Jeff!"

"No, it's not enough. You know damn well the way the MVD operates. You know damn well you're safe. You know they'll watch—are watching now. And every Hungarian you see often enough, or I see often enough, that Hungarian is as good as dead. Do you want to be a murderer, Keller?"

Keller said, "One last chance, Jeff. I know you're unstrung. The bomb—that explosion."

"I'm not unstrung."

"I'd hate to believe that you were a coward. The Admiral thinks you're a coward. One last chance, Jeff. I directly order you to continue with your work."

"I'm not going to do it."

Keller shook his head. He seemed older than forty, now, and he had lost his spruceness, his straightness. "You will go to your apartment. I will have to see the Admiral."

As Jeff walked out of the living room he turned his head. Keller had both hands on the fireplace mantel, and was staring into the mirror, and his lips moved as if he called on someone for help.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1

JEFF HAD A BAD three days. It would be much better if he himself went to the Admiral, he believed, but he could not violate the unwritten protocol governing affairs of this kind within the Department. He couldn't go over the head of his immediate superior. He couldn't speak of the matter to the Admiral, or the Consul General, until he was summoned. There was ingrained in him a respect for this protocol, and its reasons were apparent, like going through channels and following the chain-of-command in the Army.

The first day, nobody called him, or visited. This in itself was a bad sign. It indicated he was leprous with trouble. He spent the day typing a letter to Horace Locke. The letter was a careful summary of everything Leonides had told him of what Leonides had called the Second Russian Revolution. He could not, of course, mention Atlantis Project, but he did think it was safe to say:

"I have had trouble over my job, and I have a premonition that I may not long be in a position to convey this information officially. Therefore I am passing it along to you. I am sure that with your long experience in the Department you will know what to do."

He had no idea how he was going to get the letter to Locke. He knew that any letter he dropped into the pouch, from now on, would be suspect. And he had the same premonition Susan had. Time was running out. The letter to Horace Locke was three pages long. He folded it and put it in his inside coat pocket. That night

when he undressed he took it out of the pocket and lodged it under his pillow. He woke up several times in the night and felt under the pillow to be sure it was still there.

The second day Major L'Engle came to see him, looking harassed. "The Admiral ate me out," he said. "He's wild. What happened?"

"You mean in your dispensary?"

"Sure, in my dispensary."

Jeff told him what happened, and the Major nodded and said, "That's what I thought, but nobody is going to believe me, or you."

"What do you mean, won't believe you?" Jeff asked.

"Well, you taking that Blue Eighty-Eight is only part of it." The Major twisted his hands together as if what he was saying were difficult. "Baker, that thwarted, lard-faced harridan in white reported other drugs missing. I knew they were missing before she did. You see, I took them."

Jeff said, "I suppose they blame that on me too."

"Oh, no, the Admiral lets me have all that. You see, I told him. I told him the truth, but he thinks I sold the stuff on the Bourse, and I'm under charges."

Jeff took out the bottle of cognac he kept locked in his dispatch case and gave the Major a drink, because obviously the Major needed a drink. Then he took one himself. "I'm confused," Jeff said.

The Major drank the cognac in a gulp. "If I had just been smart enough to lie! If I had just told the Admiral that some of the G.I.s in the M.A.'s office had gonorrhea, or some of the staff had been sick, or even that I was sick myself, nothing would have happened. But I told the truth. You know the Hunyadi Home?"

"I've heard of it. The home for boys."

"Yes. It's near my place, and every once in a while I drop in there. I don't have any sons myself. But I like boys. Their infirmary is deplorable. No equipment at all."

"So?"

"So for the last six or eight months I've been helping them out. I've saved three pneumonias, and one meningitis, and some others. I told the Admiral the truth about it. In the first place, he doesn't

believe me, and in the second place he ate me out anyway because I'm not supposed to use the Mission's drugs for indigenous personnel. He's right, of course. No getting away from it. He's right, officially."

"I'm sorry," Jeff said. "I'm sorry that I started this."

"Oh, I told him about you too. I told him it was perfectly okay if you took a Blue Eighty-Eight because there wasn't anybody there to give it to you. I explained the stuff wasn't habit-forming unless you took it for a considerable period. Did it do any good? No. Every time I mentioned your name he just sputtered. I don't know what else you've done, Baker, but whatever it is, you've got him wild."

"You know what I think?" Jeff said. "I think you did just right."

"Well, thanks, I really think so, too. But it's not going to do any good."

"I hope he'll cool down."

"He won't. I'm on tomorrow's plane, going home under charges."

"Jesus, that's too bad." He tried to think of something cheerful, because he liked L'Engle. "You'll be all right," was the best he could do.

"No, I won't. There'll be an I.G. investigation, and anyway a reprimand, and they'll look on their maps and find either the hottest place in the world or the coldest place in the world and they'll say, 'We've got a new post for you, L'Engle, where there are no black markets. Goodbye, bub.'"

Jeff poured another drink, and when he handed the glass to L'Engle he looked deep into his face. L'Engle's face was like rock, but rock weathered and mellowed by his years and his profession. "So you're going on tomorrow's plane," Jeff said. "And you're a decent guy. I know you're a decent guy."

"You don't have to feel so damn sorry for me."

"I wasn't feeling sorry. I was just thinking. Will you deliver a letter for me, Major?"

"Depends where it's going. I'm going to Washington."

"That's where the letter's going, Major."

"So long as it doesn't contain classified material, sure."

Jeff said, "This hasn't been classified, yet. There isn't any classification for it."

"Now that sounds interesting," the Major said. "That sounds mysterious. It won't get me in trouble? I'm in enough trouble now, Baker."

Jeff finished his drink. He wished he had time to think it all over, weighing and measuring the chances as he had been taught to do. But there wasn't time. Almost all the time was gone. Well, there was such a thing as a calculated risk. Once in a while, a man had to take a calculated risk. Eisenhower had taken a calculated risk when he spread his green divisions thinly through the Ardennes. Marshall had called ERP a calculated risk. Now he would take his. "This letter might get you into trouble, Major," Jeff said. "I want you to read it, and make your own decision."

He handed the letter to L'Engle.

The Major started reading it, and then he took a pair of glasses from the inside pocket of his blouse, and put them on, and started again. When he finished he handed it back to Jeff. "I'll deliver it," he said. "You got an envelope?"

"Yes." Jeff sat down at the desk and wrote, "Horace Locke. Old State. 17th and Pennsylvania Avenues, N.W., Washington, D.C." He said, "Here you are."

Major L'Engle dropped the envelope into his doctor's bag. "You don't have to worry about it," he said, "because this bag always goes with me, and I never forget it."

"I'm not worried," Jeff said.

"Yes, you are," said L'Engle. "You're worried that I might talk. You don't have to worry about that, either." He took the bag in his hand. "I guess I'll be going now."

"So long."

"So long. Look me up—if you ever get to Alaska."

And he was gone.

The morning of the third day Quincy Todd phoned and said, "Hey, where you been?"

"You know damn well where I've been."

"You don't have to act like an untouchable. You're not, you know."

"No, I didn't know."

"Well meet me at our place at noon and I'll tell you."

So at noon Jeff walked to the Café Molnar. He was strong again now. The weakness that comes with confinement to bed had gone, and his nerves were good.

Quincy Todd was sitting at the table which by custom was theirs. But Marina wasn't there to serve them. Another girl was there, and Jeff said, "Where's your girl friend?"

"I don't know," Quincy said, "and she's not my girl friend any more. That Russky beat my time."

"You mean my Russky—the Major?"

"Yes, your Russky."

"I thought she didn't like Russians?"

"She likes that one. Every night that I've been here for the last two weeks, there she is with the Russky. So what can I do? Can I go over and try to ease him out of the picture? No. I just sit here and it comes closing time and he takes her home—or somewhere. What's he got that I haven't got?"

"Nothing. He just gets here first. If you got here first, he'd be the one who'd have to sit alone."

"I've got to work. I don't think that Russky ever works."

"Don't worry, he works."

Quincy dumped his cognac into his coffee. "First today," he said. "Do you know what we call the second floor of the Legation now? The Whispering Gallery. And do you know what they're all talking about? About you, Jeff."

"I'm not surprised."

"Now, Jeff, I don't want you to tell me anything about this. I know you're in a jam, and I know the whole thing is extra secret. I just want to tell you what's been going on, and I want to pass along a little advice."

"Okay."

"In the first place they've been having conferences about you every day—I mean the big boys—the Admiral, and Morgan Collingwood, and Fred Keller, and Quigley. That means they can't agree. So you can figure you've got a friend or two, or there wouldn't be any argument."

"Maybe," Jeff said. "Maybe they've already decided what to do, but they haven't agreed on how to do it."

"No, I don't think they've decided, because they haven't sent any cables about you. I know, because I've had a couple of dates with Marge Collins. She'd never tell me what was in a cable, but she'd say if one went."

"That doesn't mean much," Jeff said. He knew that Atlantis Project could not be mentioned in a cable. It was absurd to be optimistic.

"And another thing, they're going to call you in tomorrow. I don't know what you've done, but whatever you've done they'll probably give you a chance to explain."

"I've already explained."

Quincy Todd stared out of the window with his blue eyes that couldn't seem to blink. On this day it was snowing, but there was no cheerfulness in the snow. There was no longer beauty in a snowfall in Budapest. It was only added misery. "I don't want them to boot you out of here, Jeff," he said. "You're human."

"I've got a girl back in Washington," Jeff said.

"Don't we all?"

"I suppose."

"I've got a hunch, Jeff, that if you go into this thing tomorrow and say, 'Okay, I've been a bad boy and I won't do it again,' why nothing will happen."

"I'll think it over," Jeff promised.

3

On the afternoon of that third day Jeff's phone rang again. At first he thought it was somebody at the Legation, because when he used only simple phrases Leonides' voice was without accent, and almost American.

"I've got to see you right away," Leonides said.

"Who is this?"

"Don't you know?"

"I'm not sure."

"The night you had four fives, I had four tens."

"Oh. Okay. Where?"

"The same place as last time. In about thirty minutes. But you start right now."

"Sure. In thirty minutes."

It was a sensible precaution that he enter the church quite a time before Leonides. He rang for the elevator, waited until it was on the way up, and then raced down the stairs. He didn't want Sandor to see in which direction he went.

On this dark day St. Stephen's was darker, even, than it had been before. On this day there was no choir, nor music from the organ. In the gloom he could see small groups of women silent on the benches. They had come in from the cold, or rested here a while, their baskets beside them, before trudging through the snow to their homes and their stoves.

There were some women on the bench he and Leonides had occupied before, so he found a vacant bench two rows closer to the altar. He genuflected, and made his mouth move, so as not to be different and attract attention, and then he sat down, his head bowed. He looked at his watch. Twenty minutes.

Exactly on the minute he heard the scrape of boots on the stone corridor, and felt someone brush against the bench. He did not raise his head until Leonides sat down close to him. Then he saw that

the trousers were not Russian uniform trousers, but worn, shabby flannels.

But the face was that of Leonides. He was wearing a civilian suit much too small for him. The trousers climbed up the heavily muscled legs, and the thick wrists extended six inches out of the cuffs as he bent his elbows. He looked like a boy in the year of his greatest growth, whose family cannot afford a new suit. "What happened to you?" Jeff whispered. "Where did you get that outfit?"

Leonides didn't raise his cropped head an inch, and when he spoke Jeff could detect no movement of his lips. "I am a fugitive. I don't speak of how I got these clothes."

"Your plan?"

"Is known."

"How?"

"They questioned Yassovsky. They questioned him for one month before they killed him."

"What're you going to do?"

"Run the border. Run the border across the Raab into the British Zone. Then to the Hochschwab and our transmitter. We do not quit. We fight."

Jeff tried to analyze the risks, the possibilities, the terrible dangers. "Those clothes won't do. I'll get one of my suits. They'll fit better."

"No. It is better to be badly dressed. To be well dressed is fatal."

Jeff said, "I don't think much of your chances, Leonides. You know how they watch the border. You know how they watch for deserters. And they'll be after you. You know they'll be after you."

"There is no chance here. Here my face is too well known. I must go quickly."

"Do you need anything?"

"Perhaps some American money. It is wanted everywhere. If you have it, Jeff?"

Jeff reached in his pocket and took out his wallet. He had five twenty-dollar bills in an inner pouch. He handed them under his knees to Leonides. "I still think it's terribly dangerous. You haven't papers, or anything, have you?"

"Papers are no good for me," Leonides said. "Today nobody can safely cross a boundary even with an endorsement from God. Only the gypsies travel today. Only the gypsies laugh at passports. Only the gypsies know the safe ways, for they have been doing it for two thousand years."

"I see," Jeff said. "I see."

A woman with a shawl over her head moved in beside them. She set down a market basket, and in the basket was a single loaf of black bread with snow on it. She was very tired. Leonides looked at her, and whispered, "She is okay. She has too many worries to be curious of others. Now I called you for a reason you must have guessed. We will not see each other again for a long time, Jeff. So I give you the name of another, with whom you can have liaison. Zatsikeffsky, the Civil Air Attaché."

"How do you spell it?"

"You'd better write it down. Have you a pencil?"

Jeff moved very slowly, raising his hand to his chest. He found a pencil in his vest pocket. Leonides gave him a brown paper envelope, and spelled out Zatsikeffsky, slowly and in whispers.

"And in case something happens to him, too?" Jeff asked.

"He is the last of us here in Budapest."

"Elsewhere?"

Leonides was silent.

"Can't you tell me, Leonides?"

"It is forbidden. I am pledged never to mention the name. Yet on occasion one must take a chance, and I must now take it. I know the names of few important ones in other places. We do not wish to know. It is not good to know, for it could happen to any of us what happened to Yassovsky, and there is no man who will not talk. Only when a man is dead is he truly silent. I know one in Moscow who is above me." He mentioned a three-syllable name, and Jeff wrote it down. "You spell it," Leonides observed.

"I've heard it before."

"He is a great man."

"He must be. And a brave one." Jeff thought of his own troubles,

and wondered whether he should tell Leonides, and decided he wouldn't do it, because Leonides had enough worries now. He did say, "I've sent a report to Washington, Leonides, to the man I completely trust."

"That's good. It's not so important that you be secret now, except with the names. As to the plan itself, it is known because of Yasovsky. Now I will go, Jeff. The quicker we start, the better."

"So long, Leonides."

"Goodbye."

Leonides rose and moved away, his hands in his pockets, and his head lowered.

Jeff remained in the church for another half-hour. The first time he had come to St. Stephen's to pray, and had forgotten to pray. But this time he prayed.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1

THAT WAS THURSDAY. At ten o'clock Friday morning Lieutenant Commander Phelan, of the Naval Attaché's office, came to Jeff's room. He was dressed in his best uniform, and wore his ribbons. Jeff guessed that what he had to say would be formal. Jeff was prepared for him. Jeff had dressed in his best blue suit.

"Mr. Baker," Phelan said, "the Admiral sent me to inform you that you are wanted in his office."

"At what time?"

"Immediately, if you don't mind, Mr. Baker."

"I don't mind, Commander. Do you have transportation?"

"I do."

On the way to the Mission they talked about the weather.

2

When Jeff entered the Admiral's office he could see that this was not to be so much a trial as passage of sentence. He could tell by their stiffness. The Admiral was behind his desk, and the others—Keller, Collingwood, and Quigley—were seated in a semicircle with their backs to the light. There was an empty straight chair in front of the desk, and Jeff knew he was supposed to take that chair. He did not want to sit there, however, because the light would be in his eyes and he could not clearly see their faces. "Sit down, Mr. Baker," the Admiral said.

"If you don't mind I'll move this chair," Jeff said, and he did move it towards the end of the desk. Then he sat down. In the better light he could see the Admiral's face growing red.

The Admiral picked up a sheaf of papers, rustled them into a pile, and put them down again. The model cruiser, carrier, and four miniature destroyers still sailed across his desk, but in disgraceful formation. "Now, Mr. Baker," the Admiral began, "you know why you're here. No matter what my personal feelings may be, I want to be fair with you. It's always been my contention that every man deserves a hearing. I'd give a hearing to a seaman, second class, and I'll give one to you. Now what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Nothing, sir," Jeff said.

"Don't you have any statement?" the Admiral asked. He seemed surprised. "You know, Mr. Baker, this is a very serious proposition."

"I'm aware of it, sir. I've already made my statement to Mr. Keller. I'm sure he reported it to you accurately." He knew that Fred Keller's training made it impossible for him to lie, or omit any word of what Jeff had said, in an official statement. He looked at Keller. Fred's face still seemed distraught, as it had looked when he left the apartment. Keller nodded, almost imperceptibly.

"It is absolutely incomprehensible to me," the Admiral said, "that you would consort with a Russian, and be taken in by such a cock-and-bull story. Not to speak of your other actions. Not to mention your shameful public display before the Hungarian police simply because there's a little harmless explosion. Why I've seen men stand up under a sixteen-inch salvo and grin. Done it myself."

Jeff thought the Admiral must be one of those born brave soldiers—a MacArthur or a Patton—naturally contemptuous of death. Other men were different. Other men didn't like war, didn't like any part of war. They saw no glory in its rituals or its panoply. Of course the Admiral couldn't understand this. All Jeff said was, "I can only envy you, sir."

The Admiral obviously didn't like the answer. "And you plundering drugs from the dispensary. L'Engle calls it secondary shock.

Lot of bushwa. I say that you're an addict, and I say that L'Engle's a thief and a black marketeer. That's what I say."

Jeff sensed that the Admiral was baiting him. Jeff felt that the Admiral wanted him to lose his temper. He looked at the little fleet in disarray on the desk. He kept his mouth shut.

"If it were entirely up to me—which it would be if the Department of State believed in maintaining taut ship—you'd be on the way back to the United States today with L'Engle. But the Consul General here tells me I've got to be polite to you, because you're a Foreign Service Officer." The Admiral enunciated "Foreign Service Officer" in what he thought was a babyish treble.

Jeff remained silent. He knew that nothing, now, could upset his poise, his independence, his serenity. They could put a grenade under his chair and he wouldn't budge.

"Yes, I've got to be very polite," the Admiral went on. "I can't fire you myself. I can only ask Washington to recall you. And I have to prefer charges. Well, that I'll do."

Jeff said, "I don't think it matters very much what happens to me. But what happens to Atlantis Project does matter."

"I don't think it's necessary for us to discuss the project," the Admiral said. But Jeff could see that his words were automatic, and not in accordance with his thought. "We'll keep Atlantis out of this."

"No, we won't," Jeff said.

He watched Keller. Fred was in trouble with himself.

He looked at the others. Morgan Collingwood was very still, very attentive. Jeff knew that Collingwood, as an experienced diplomat, would be projecting the situation far ahead and beyond the walls of this office.

William Quigley hadn't said anything. He was sitting with his hands in his lap, wooden as part of the furniture. Now Quigley felt called upon to speak. "If you will pardon me, Admiral," he said, "I want to point out that I am responsible to the Department for the security of Atlantis Project. Mr. Baker says that this project has been penetrated."

"I don't believe it," the Admiral said.

Quigley said, "It is not possible for anyone to say arbitrarily that it has or hasn't until there has been an investigation. I propose to conduct such an investigation."

The Admiral's office was quiet now. William Quigley raised his colorless eyes. "Jeff," he said, "it is my opinion that you haven't told us everything."

"You're right, Quig," Jeff said.

"You've seen your Russian friend again, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have."

The Admiral interrupted. "Mr. Baker, it strikes me that you have been deliberately treasonable. To our knowledge you have twice seen this Russian, and twice you've been warned. Now you say you've seen him again."

"There are two kinds of treason," Jeff said. He discovered that his voice was level and steady. "There is treason to your country and there is treason to civilization. I tried not to commit either kind."

"Then you did see him again?" the Admiral demanded.

"Yes, I did. I saw Leonides Lasenko again. I saw him yesterday afternoon. He was wearing civilian clothes, and he was trying to get across the border into the British Zone. He has become one of the *unbekannte Menschen*. He is a leader in a resistance movement against the Soviet regime."

The Admiral leaned his big frame across the desk. "Do you make this all up as you go along?" he inquired.

Jeff said, "May I continue?"

The Admiral glared. "You can say what you want. We don't have to believe it, you know. We aren't children."

"Before he left Lasenko gave me two names," Jeff went on. "One here. One in Moscow."

Quigley stirred in his chair. "Where's he going? Where's this Lasenko going?"

"He's trying to get to the Hochschwab. They've got a transmitter up there. They're going to call it RFR—Radio Free Russia."

The Admiral planted a hand on the desk. "Mr. Baker, I don't

want to hear any more of your fabrications. I think you have a twisted or diseased brain."

"I don't," said Quigley.

The Admiral turned on him. "Quigley, remember that you're not concerned with policy. You're strictly in operations, and only in security operations at that."

"I'm remembering," Quigley said.

"Can I go now?" Jeff asked. "Have you finished with me?"

"I have, Mr. Baker," the Admiral said. "You will go to your quarters."

3

When Jeff was gone the Admiral growled, "Did you ever hear such balderdash?" But nobody said anything, and the Admiral spoke again. "All right, come on. Let's get on with this. What's to be done? First send a cable to the Department, I say, asking for his immediate recall. Then we'll draw up the charges and send them in the pouch."

"We can't send them by pouch," Quigley objected. "You'll remember, sir, that nothing about Atlantis Project was to be committed to writing."

"In my estimation," the Admiral replied, "it's not necessary to go into this business of Atlantis being compromised. Fred Keller said yesterday he didn't believe it, and I don't believe it either. It'd just cause a useless flap in Washington. You know how they panic in Washington."

Now Keller rose. He stood behind the chair and gripped the back of the chair. He wet his lips. "I'm afraid I've changed my mind, Admiral," he said. "I'm afraid we've failed. Whether Jeff Baker leaked, whether the leak was in Washington, or whether it was somewhere else I don't know. But I find I must conclude that Jeff Baker is telling the truth, until proved otherwise."

"I agree with you, Fred," said Morgan Collingwood. "I don't think we can reach an arbitrary decision here at this time. I think there should be a complete investigation in Washington. I think

Quigley should go on Sunday's plane, and lay the whole matter in the lap of the Department."

"I think that would be proper procedure," said Keller. "Meanwhile I feel I should discontinue Atlantis operations."

The Admiral straightened the fleet on his desk. He pushed out his lower lip. He was thinking. The Admiral had not become an admiral by disregarding the advice of his staff. The Admiral knew what to do when he sighted unexpected enemy strength. "You certainly changed your mind in a hurry," he fired at Keller.

"Yes, I suppose I did," Keller said. "But now I am certain of how I feel."

The Admiral shook his impressive, white-maned head. In his day the world had been understandable. We had fifteen battleships, the British had fifteen battleships, the Japs nine, and the rest were second-rate powers. A man spent his life learning Mahan, and then heretics came along who said the battleship was just a fat target. The heretics talked of psychological warfare, and political warfare, and battle by radio. He had tried to learn this new type of warfare, but he had found it difficult and even unbelievable. How did it fit in with Mahan? How could a man disregard the Bible? The world would be better off if it got back to battleships. With battleships, a man knew where he stood. "Well, I suppose I'll have to go along with you," he said.

"May I suggest, sir," Keller said, "that Mr. Collingwood and Quig and I prepare a report on this matter without referring to the Atlantis part? Quig can catch Sunday's plane and take the document safe hand, and fill in the Department orally on the Atlantis section."

"Yes, I suppose that's the way to do it," the Admiral agreed. "It should go to Matson, or the Undersecretary, or the Secretary."

"The correct channel," said Morgan Collingwood, "would be to tell Matson first, and then allow Matson to inform the highest levels."

"Very well," said the Admiral. Now that he had thought it over, he could see that it was probably best to pass it along to Matson. It would be necessary to discontinue Atlantis for a time. This was

disappointing. He suspected that the Navy would soon recall him to active duty, and it would be nice to go back with a third star. But if there were a security scandal during his administration of the Budapest Mission, he might not get active duty. The safe thing to do was lay it in the lap of Washington.

4

On Saturday Jeff didn't leave his room, even for a walk. He was afraid to leave because someone might telephone, or drop up to see him, and he wouldn't be there. He concentrated on his Toynbee, but his mind kept wandering to the letter he had sent to Horace Locke.

He tried to imagine the course of that letter. If L'Engle's plane was right on time, and if L'Engle cleared customs in a hurry, and if he went directly to Old State, then Horace Locke might have received the letter Friday afternoon. But if anything happened—any delay at all—then he wouldn't get it until today. He wondered whether Horace Locke worked Saturdays. There wasn't any reason for him to work Saturdays because there wasn't anything for him to do. Maybe L'Engle would find Locke at home if he wasn't in his office. He thought Locke lived in the Metropolitan Club, but he wasn't sure. He was sure that L'Engle would deliver the letter. On that he would gamble his life.

Quincy Todd called him late in the morning and said, "I see you're still here."

"Barely," Jeff said.

"Lonesome?"

"Uh-huh."

"I'll come up tonight and bring some local talent."

"I'd rather not." He had been trying to write Susan, and found there was nothing really he could say, and anyway there was the chance he might find himself back in Washington before the letter.

"Just for laughs."

"Okay, for laughs." It would be good, anyway, to see a human face.

And Saturday afternoon Quigley visited him. Quigley sat down in the prim way he had, and dropped a worn dispatch case, its lock askew and its seams leaking threads, at his feet. "Going somewhere?" Jeff said.

"Yes, I'm going to Washington. I suppose you can guess why."

"I suppose I can. Do you think I have a chance?"

Quigley considered the question. "I have been in the Department for thirty years," he said finally. "If I could guess what the Department was going to do, it would be necessary for me to be Secretary of State, and not a security officer. On occasion I believe that not even the Secretary knows what the Department will do, until it is done. That has been my experience."

"That's a helluva answer, Quig."

"You're in a helluva situation, if you will pardon the language."

"Am I?"

"Yes. You see, you have nothing to substantiate your story. It is true that your friend Leonides doesn't seem to be in Budapest. That I've discovered. But it doesn't prove anything. He might have been transferred, or on a trip, or down at Balaton for the skating."

"It's true."

"I believe it, Jeff. But who else will? Will Matson? Will the Secretary, if it goes to the Secretary? Do you have a friend in the Department, Jeff? It might be better if you had a friend in the Department."

Jeff thought it over. "I suppose you'd call him a friend. You know Horace Locke?"

"Certainly I know Horace Locke. It was a terrible blow to the Department when it lost Horace Locke. It was like losing Sumner Welles."

Jeff drew in his breath. "Lost Horace Locke! He's still there, isn't he?"

"If you mean is his name still on the Foreign Service List, yes he is

still there. But he has no influence, and almost no job. I feel very sorry for him, and I'm afraid he won't be able to help you."

"He is the only friend, except Susan Pickett, of course."

Quigley struggled with the twisted lock of his dispatch case, said, "Darn it! Darn it!" and finally it opened. He took out a notebook. "Now, Jeff, I want you to tell me the rest of the story about Lasenko—every detail—everything you can remember."

So Jeff told everything he hadn't told in the Admiral's office the day before—except the two names—the survivor in Budapest and the one in Moscow, the big one. He knew that Quigley was going to ask for the names, and when he did ask Jeff said:

"I'm sorry, Quig."

Quigley nodded. "I understand. As a matter of fact I think you're very discreet, Jeff, and I won't press you. You say you sent a confidential report on Lasenko to Locke. Of course the Department doesn't consider that proper, Jeff. On the other hand it is done very frequently, and usually the reasons are excellent, as in this case. So I shall say nothing of it. But I do urge you also to send the names to Locke. As you pointed out to Lasenko, in case anything happens to you."

Jeff smiled. "In case anything happens to me. How will I get the names to Locke?"

"I'll take them."

"Really?"

"Certainly I'll take them. They'll be in Washington Monday. Just sit down at your typewriter and write a note to Horace Locke. You can't mention your own affair, of course, because that is restricted Department business. Just write the names, and say if anything happens to Lasenko, these other men can be contacted."

A man couldn't do everything himself. A man had to trust other men. He found he trusted Quigley as he trusted L'Engle. He moved across the room and sat down at the typewriter and wrote one brief paragraph.

Then he signed his name and addressed an envelope. He folded the paper and slipped it inside the envelope and handed it to Quigley. "Here you are."

"Aren't you going to seal it?"

"No."

Quigley took the envelope and dropped it into his dispatch case on top of his notebook and other envelopes garnished with red wax. He didn't say anything. He spent an absurd length of time fussing with the lock.

Jeff watched him. He seemed at this time so ridiculously small and inefficient. Jeff went to the closet and found his own dispatch case, which since he arrived in Budapest had been used for nothing except a liquor cache. He removed the half-empty bottle of cognac, and the pint of emergency rye. What was it Susan had said about this case? She hoped it would bring back something to wipe her fear away? Was that what she had said? Well, this was the only chance the case would get. "Quig," he said, "how about trading cases? Yours has had it, and I never use mine."

Quigley, still bending over, looked up. "That's an awful good case. I wouldn't think of taking it. This one is shot, but I'll get another in New York."

"Come on, take this one," Jeff argued.

"No, you keep it."

"I wish you would. I've got reasons."

Quigley stood up and took Jeff's case and ran his fingers along the beautifully turned leather and picked at the seams and inspected the lock. Then he took his envelopes and notebook out of the old case and transferred them to Jeff's case. "This is awfully good of you," he said. "This is the best case I've ever had."

"You're really doing me a favor when you take it," Jeff said.

Quigley shook hands, and Jeff said, "I guess I won't be seeing you again."

"I hope you'll be seeing me very soon and very often. You've done a very nice thing for me, Jeff. I don't think anybody ever did such a nice thing for me. Now goodbye."

Jeff thought it was very strange that a hard little guy like Quigley would be so upset, and even have tears in his eyes, and he wondered why.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1

QUIGLEY HAD CROSSED the Atlantic sixty-four times by ship, and this was his fiftieth crossing by air, and therefore something of a milestone. He kept a notebook to record miles traveled, and times of departure and arrival, and amusing non-official incidents en route, so that when he got home he would have something to talk about with his wife. This record was also useful when he made out his expense vouchers, and figured his per diem travel allowance. No Department finance officer or general accounting office auditor ever questioned the figures of William Quigley.

On this day, after he was seated in the Constellation, and had wedged his dispatch case against the plane's cushiony side with his leg, he took out his notebook—the thirtieth of identical size and shape that he had used up since joining the Department—and wrote, "December 25, 1949." December 25th. Another Christmas away from home.

He waited while the stewardess brought him chewing gum, and asked whether his seat belt was fastened, and did he want a paper or magazine. This was always the most enjoyable part of the trip home. When the neat, clean stewardess smiled and spoke to him, and he smelled the washed, engineered air inside an airplane, he was already back in America. America sent shining, metal slivers of itself through the air, filled with America's conveniences and luxuries and speed and efficiencies, to bring its wanderers home.

The motors showed their power, the plane began to move, and when he was sure they were airborne he wrote, "Took off from Budapest 9:32 A.M. Central European Time." He looked again at the date. In a few days the first half of the century would be gone. It had been some century, so far. In this half-century—in his lifetime—the wonders he had seen! The electric light, the telephone, automobiles, airplanes, radios, all the new sciences, the new drugs, television—they all belonged to his century. None of them had been around when he was born. What a century it could have been, but what a century it had been. He wondered whether the second half would be any better than the first. It couldn't be much worse. Or could it? What would the school children, oh, in two thousand years, remember of his century? Would they recall all the wonders, or would they recite, "The Twentieth Century was the century of the atomic bomb and the beginning of the Second Dark Ages?"

He wondered whether he had done anything to help things along and he was still wondering when he fell asleep. While he slept the pressure of the dispatch case was comfortable against his leg.

He slept from Budapest to Vienna and he slept from Vienna to Prague and from Prague to Shannon. In Shannon he ate roast beef sandwiches and drank a quart of rich Irish milk. It was when they were halfway across the Atlantic that he put his dispatch case across his knees, opened it, and checked the envelopes within. When he came to Jeff's letter to Horace Locke he balanced it on his fingers and it was very thin and fragile, not at all like the other bulkier envelopes with their heavy red seals. He put it back in the dispatch case. Then he slept again.

When the plane touched down at National Airport he took out his notebook and wrote, "December 26, 1949—arrived Washington 10:57 A.M. E.S.T."

Customs and Immigration knew him, of course. As he got into a cab a newsboy was yelling about a new crisis, but he didn't buy a paper because he didn't want to know of any more crises. He debated what to do first, and decided that business must come first, and said, "New State."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I

QUIGLEY HAD CROSSED the Atlantic sixty-four times by ship, and this was his fiftieth crossing by air, and therefore something of a milestone. He kept a notebook to record miles traveled, and times of departure and arrival, and amusing non-official incidents en route, so that when he got home he would have something to talk about with his wife. This record was also useful when he made out his expense vouchers, and figured his per diem travel allowance. No Department finance officer or general accounting office auditor ever questioned the figures of William Quigley.

On this day, after he was seated in the Constellation, and had wedged his dispatch case against the plane's cushiony side with his leg, he took out his notebook—the thirtieth of identical size and shape that he had used up since joining the Department—and wrote, "December 25, 1949." December 25th. Another Christmas away from home.

He waited while the stewardess brought him chewing gum, and asked whether his seat belt was fastened, and did he want a paper or magazine. This was always the most enjoyable part of the trip home. When the neat, clean stewardess smiled and spoke to him, and he smelled the washed, engineered air inside an airplane, he was already back in America. America sent shining, metal slivers of itself through the air, filled with America's conveniences and luxuries and speed and efficiencies, to bring its wanderers home.

The motors showed their power, the plane began to move, and when he was sure they were airborne he wrote, "Took off from Budapest 9:32 A.M. Central European Time." He looked again at the date. In a few days the first half of the century would be gone. It had been some century, so far. In this half-century—in his lifetime—the wonders he had seen! The electric light, the telephone, automobiles, airplanes, radios, all the new sciences, the new drugs, television—they all belonged to his century. None of them had been around when he was born. What a century it could have been, but what a century it had been. He wondered whether the second half would be any better than the first. It couldn't be much worse. Or could it? What would the school children, oh, in two thousand years, remember of his century? Would they recall all the wonders, or would they recite, "The Twentieth Century was the century of the atomic bomb and the beginning of the Second Dark Ages?"

He wondered whether he had done anything to help things along and he was still wondering when he fell asleep. While he slept the pressure of the dispatch case was comfortable against his leg.

He slept from Budapest to Vienna and he slept from Vienna to Prague and from Prague to Shannon. In Shannon he ate roast beef sandwiches and drank a quart of rich Irish milk. It was when they were halfway across the Atlantic that he put his dispatch case across his knees, opened it, and checked the envelopes within. When he came to Jeff's letter to Horace Locke he balanced it on his fingers and it was very thin and fragile, not at all like the other bulkier envelopes with their heavy red seals. He put it back in the dispatch case. Then he slept again.

When the plane touched down at National Airport he took out his notebook and wrote, "December 26, 1949—arrived Washington 10:57 A.M. E.S.T."

Customs and Immigration knew him, of course. As he got into a cab a newsboy was yelling about a new crisis, but he didn't buy a paper because he didn't want to know of any more crises. He debated what to do first, and decided that business must come first, and said, "New State."

"Virginia Avenue entrance?"

"That's correct."

2

While he waited in Gerald Matson's secretarial office he wished he'd stopped at the airport restaurant for coffee. People came in and out of Matson's office as if they were attached to an endless chain. He said to the receptionist, "I beg your pardon, but did you give Mr. Matson my name?"

"Mister—" the receptionist hesitated—"Quigley, was it?"

"Yes, Quigley. I just came in from Budapest. Didn't the Admiral cable that I was coming?"

"I really don't know," the girl said. He could see that she hadn't been long in the Department. He classified her as a CAF-4, engaged to a CAF-5.

"Well perhaps," he suggested, "you'd better tell Mr. Matson that I'm here from Budapest, and I have to see him on important business."

"All our business is important," she parried. She thought he was a peculiar little man, who probably sold insurance. She rummaged in a drawer until she found a handkerchief, wiped her lips off, and did them over again, wider.

Into the mind of Quigley there crept a pixie. "You will, eventually, tell him I'm here, won't you?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes, eventually."

Quigley thought, I've never done anything like this before, and why I should start at my age I don't know. But it might be fun and I think I'll try it because at my age one doesn't have much fun. "When you decide to present my name to Mr. Matson," he said, "would you also give him a message? Just a few words?"

"Okay, Mister Quigley. See, I remember your name."

"So you did. Just say, 'Atlantis has been penetrated.'"

She thought it over, and said, "That sounds dirty to me. Who's Atlantis?"

"Never mind. Just tell him."

She repeated, "'Atlantis has been penetrated.' Okay, Mr. Quigley, as soon as Mr. Soukis has conferred with Mr. Matson, I'll go in there and say, 'Atlantic has been penetrated.'"

"Atlantis."

"Oh, sure. Atlantis."

A man came out of Matson's office, and the receptionist said, "Well, there goes Soukis. He's a big Greek. But I mean, big. Now I'll tell Mr. Matson you're here."

She came out again almost immediately. She didn't stop in the outer office, but fled into the hallway. Behind her was Gerald Matson, his dark eyes blazing like beacons in the pallid desert of his face.

3

Quigley's interview with Matson lasted through the lunch hour, and into the afternoon. Quigley presented the documents, and then told what could not be put down on paper. He told everything, because he was a perfect reporter. He mentioned everything except the letter he had for Horace Locke. This he classified as a personal matter.

When he had finished Matson asked, "And what did the Admiral recommend?"

"He wants Baker recalled."

"I don't blame him, but what about Atlantis?"

"He's laying that in your lap, Mr. Matson. Keller has discontinued operations."

"He's not going to put it in my lap. It's Keller's baby."

"Isn't it your baby, too, Mr. Matson?" Quigley asked gently.

Atlantis was his baby, of course. It was true he had not conceived it, but he had adopted it, nurtured it through the infancy of planning, presented it to all the best people, and pushed it into active maturity. He displayed it in the Department's higher levels with a parent's pride for a genius son. Atlantis multiplied his importance in the Department. It placed additional personnel under his control, and gave him access, at any time, to those who decided national

policy. It had won him a place on the Planning Board. It had elevated the Balkans Division, so long a Department stepchild, almost to the level of Western Europe, and certainly to the level of Central Europe and Far East. If Atlantis succeeded he would share the credit with Fred Keller. He could look forward to an important Embassy. Perhaps even Paris. Anya would love Paris.

If Atlantis failed he would lose ground. If the circumstances surrounding the failure smelled of carelessness or scandal, it could be—Matson had a horrible vision. "This Baker," he remarked, "has certainly fouled things up. Not that I didn't expect it. I expected it all along. My opinion is that he got himself into trouble and concocted a story, and as he became more involved he piled one lie on another, in the manner of all liars. Furthermore, I think he was deliberately malicious."

"Whatever mistakes he may have made," said Quigley, "I won't believe Jeff Baker is malicious. I'm not even sure he made any mistakes."

"Oh, yes, he's malicious!" said Matson. "He knows very well that my wife is a White Russian! So he cunningly contrived to quote this so-called Russian turncoat as blaming this so-called penetration on White Russians here in the United States. You know what I think it is? I think it's a plot!"

Quigley crossed his knees, and seemed to be absorbed in adjusting the crease in his trousers. "You know," he said, "I hadn't thought of that."

"You don't think my wife would be indiscreet, do you?" Matson said.

"Anybody can be indiscreet—even me."

"Oh, come on now!"

"What do you intend to do, Mr. Matson?" Quigley asked.

"I'm not sure—yet. But I expect to do something fast."

"Are there any more questions you wish to ask me?"

"No. I'll call if I need you."

"Goodbye, Mr. Matson." Quigley was in a hurry to leave.

When he was gone Matson picked up the telephone and called his wife. "Anya," he said, "where's Iggy?"

"Why, he's still in Hollywood."

"That place is full of Reds."

"What are you talking about?"

He hesitated, while he tried to frame the question safely. "Anya," he said, "now don't be angry, but I want to ask you something. Do you remember when Iggy was in Washington and we were discussing something very important, and I told you not to talk in front of him?"

"Of course I remember it. Why did you bring it up?"

"You didn't talk to him any more, did you?"

There was that infinitesimal moment of hesitation, that the lie detector can diagnose but the human ear can only sense, and never with sureness. "Why, of course not, dear."

"That's good, dear."

"Why, what's this all about, Gerald?"

"Never mind. Forget it."

"Now, Gerald, don't tell me forget it! You call up with these mysterious questions and want me to forget it. I want to know what's the matter. After all, I'm a woman, and a woman is a curious creature."

"Can't talk about it over the phone. Just remember that you never mentioned anything to Iggy."

"Why, I didn't, dear," she said, and hung up.

Gerald Matson made up his mind.

4

And Quigley was walking up the stairs of Old State, on the Pennsylvania Avenue side.

He found Horace Locke at his desk. They had not seen each other for two or three years, but their greetings didn't show this. In the space of their service and acquaintanceship two or three years was not a long period of time. They greeted each other as if they

had lunched together at the Occidental only a week or two before.

Quigley unsnapped the lock on his case and Horace Locke said, "That's a nice case you've got, Quig. Your old one finally collapse?"

"I traded," said Quigley, "with young Jeff Baker." He brought out Jeff's letter and handed it to Locke. "I brought this letter from him."

Horace Locke took the envelope and turned it in his hands. He saw that the flap was unsealed—saw that it had never been sealed. "Do you know what's in here?" he asked.

"No. Not exactly. I know it contains two names. Two important names. I don't know what they are. I presume you got Jeff's other letter, safe hand?"

"I did." Horace Locke allowed his mind to search its experience and reach a conclusion. The conclusion was that Jeff trusted Quigley implicitly. Jeff had left the letter unsealed for a purpose. Jeff wanted him to know that Quig was a friend. So Horace Locke could ask the question. "What kind of trouble is the boy in?"

"I'm going to tell you," Quigley said. "I don't know what's come over me. Everything about this case is classified, some of it confidential, some secret, and some of it top secret, and I'm still going to tell you."

"I used to be allowed to keep secrets," said Horace Locke.

"So you did. So you did. But I feel you'll have to take action, as well as use discretion."

Horace Locke looked out of the window at the White House, and the Capitol beyond. It was his view. He had seen it a long time. But it always fascinated him, for somehow it seemed always to be changing. It was almost as if the buildings changed with the character of the people inside them. "I've known ever since Friday that I would have to take action," Locke said. "I knew Friday why I had been waiting here all this time."

"I don't think it will be easy for you," Quigley said.

"I will do what is required."

"I know you will." For the second time he told the story. It did not differ in so much as a word from the story he had told Matson.

It was dusk when Quigley left Old State. He should have called his wife. If she knew that he had arrived in the morning, and still hadn't called, she would be angry. And she would know what time his plane landed, because of the notebook. He crossed to the Willard, and bought twelve roses. Roses in mid-winter Mrs. Quigley could not resist.

5

Horace Locke considered his first step. Eventually the affair would have to go to the Secretary. Of that he was sure. Certainly the news of this Russian fission should go before the Secretary at once. The news was not unexpected to Horace Locke. He had been awaiting news of this kind. He knew the history of dictatorships. They always appeared colossal and monolithic from the outside, but inside they were hollow. They were like the buildings erected for fairs. They didn't last. By his very form of suppression, the dictator invites and compels violence from his opposition. And no ruler lives without opposition. Daggers had dispatched Caesar, bullets Mussolini. There are not enough spies to watch a whole people nor enough jails to contain a fraction of a dictator's enemies. So the Soviet dictatorship, too, would come to an end.

But more pressing was the predicament of Nicholas Baker's son. If Jeff Baker were discredited, and tossed out of the Department, his story of the Russian resistance would never be believed. It might not be believed in any case, but once he was deprived of his official standing Jeff would have no chance. Not even the newspapers would touch it. They'd label him a disgruntled young man who had been fired from the Department, probably as a security risk, and not to be believed.

The best thing was to sound out Matson. He didn't like Matson, but he understood him. He deduced it would be in Matson's interest to get rid of Nick's son. If Matson discovered that Jeff had a friend—perhaps of little influence but still of sufficient voice to be heard in some circles of the Department—Matson would hesitate. He knew Matson.

He dialed the Balkans Division. A girl, probably the receptionist in the outer office, answered. "I would like to speak to Mr. Matson," he said. "This is Horace Locke speaking. It's urgent."

"Who did you say?" the girl demanded.

"Horace Locke." He could not say, "I am Adviser to the Diplomatic Monuments and Memorials Commission." That didn't mean anything to anybody. He said, "In the Department."

"I'm sorry," the girl said in a sing-song Tennessee twang, "but Mr. Matson has gone for the day."

"Has he gone home?"

"How do I know? He's gone." The receptionist clicked off her key. Well, she thought, it was sort of a white lie. Mr. Matson was already running into overtime, drafting one of those cables. And the longer he stayed, the longer they'd all have to stay. This guy whose name she'd never heard before called up and said something was urgent, and if she put him through to Mr. Matson they might be all night. So she had done her boss a favor, and herself too. She had a dinner date and she didn't want to be late because her fellow would soon be a CAF-6 and then they would get married and she could get out of this damn nine-to-five slavery. Nobody would know, and she wasn't hurting anybody.

Horace Locke called Matson's home in Alexandria. He wasn't home yet. Anya Matson didn't know when he would be home. He must be working late at the office.

Horace Locke waited thirty minutes, and dialed Balkans again. The receptionist was still there, and he thought it strange that she would be there if Matson had left for the day. "Are you the same one who called before?" she asked.

"Why yes."

"Didn't I tell you he left?"

"Yes."

"Well, don't ring here any more. I'm busy."

Horace Locke put down his telephone gently and leaned back in his chair and told himself to control his temper. Rebuffs like this always made him feel badly, made him want to go off somewhere

where there weren't any people, and he knew that this feeling was not right. It seemed to Horace Locke that people were changing. They all seemed rude and snappish, as if they were fighting their way into the subway after an exhausting day. He was appalled by their uniform rudeness. The waiters, the barbers, hotel clerks, Pullman porters, taxi drivers, redcaps, druggists, telephone operators, building guards—their characters all seemed in the process of chemical change. Fear and uncertainty were corroding them with selfishness and greed, and the corrosion showed in rudeness. "Maybe I'm silly," Horace Locke told himself aloud. "Maybe I'm just getting old, and it's me, not other people. Maybe I'm old and irritable. I must be getting old, or what would I be doing sitting here and talking to myself?"

He tried Matson's home once more, and he still wasn't there. Well, probably Matson wouldn't make his decision at once. It would take two or three days. He would see Matson in the morning.

He wondered whether it would do any good to try the Secretary's office, and decided against it. He had no right to know anything of this affair. It would be most presumptuous for him to take it to the Secretary. It might even endanger the chances of Nick's son. Anyway he wasn't sure the Secretary would see him. He had known the Secretary many years before, and from time to time had had business contacts with the Secretary, but he had not seen him, now, for four years. So he didn't dial the Secretary, although he had a hunch the Secretary would still be on the job. Horace Locke went home to his club.

6

That morning the Secretary had ridden for his usual hour in Rock Creek Park, breakfasted at seven, and arrived at the office at eight-thirty. The early morning broadcasts had warned him he'd have a busy day. Even Arthur Godfrey sounded lugubrious, and when there was no cheer in Godfrey then the world was in a sorry state.

It was, too.

The Russians had murdered an eighteen-year-old G.I. in Vienna. So said Headquarters of United States Forces Austria. Radio Moscow's version was different, but Moscow's version was always different. He would instruct Keyes to protest. The protest wouldn't do any good.

Stockholm was frightened. All night Stockholm had seen shooting stars that didn't come from Heaven.

Something foul was going on in the uranium mines of the Belgian Congo. Brussels blamed it on Soviet propaganda. But Brussels also suggested that if the Southern Senators could be persuaded to stop screaming their racism, the blacks in the Congo might go back to work.

The un-American Committee was sniping at one of his section chiefs whose wife's nephew had attended a Communist Front rally in San Francisco. The Committee wanted him fired at once, and the section chief was in the Secretary's outer office, hysterical and in tears, with an armload of affidavits saying he had always lived in Westchester County and voted straight Republican.

The President was in bed with Virus X.

Greece and Turkey needed more money.

So did China.

The Dominican Republic said Trujillo was en route to Washington, where he expected to be received by the President and presented with a four-motored flying yacht, and a cruiser, three destroyers, and a few tanks. He wanted to fight Venezuela.

There was bad news from Korea, Afghanistan, Damascus, Jerusalem, Prague, Indo-China, Trieste, and Rome.

The Secretary lunched with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and attended a three o'clock Cabinet meeting.

When he got back to his office memoranda and cables rose in a ten-inch pile from the center of his desk. They were all urgent, and all required immediate decisions and answers.

He cancelled his press conference.

He was presented with a scroll by the Daughters of the Spanish-American War.

He took two aspirins and a glass of bicarbonate of soda, and then dictated the speech he would make the following night at the Legion banquet.

A cable typed on red paper, labeling it extremely urgent and confidential, came in from the Counselor of a Central American Mission. It said the Minister had been on a three-week toot, and what should he do?

The Secretary telephoned his wife that he wouldn't be home for dinner.

He had chicken sandwiches and milk in his office, and talked by telephone to the President, the Ambassador in London, and his son, who was going to New York for the New Year's weekend and needed an extra hundred dollars.

France needed an extra hundred million.

No matter how fast he celebrated, he couldn't seem to diminish the pile of papers on his desk, all tabbed red for urgent.

He became aware that one of his secretaries was reeling with fatigue, and sent her home.

The Department of State was quiet, now. It was past nine, and the business of government was slowing down. In all New State, only the lights in the code and cipher section and the Secretary's office still burned.

He was wearing down that pile. At ten o'clock a messenger brought four final cables, to be read and rejected or initialed.

The Secretary's hands and knees trembled with tiredness. His shoulders were broad and his courage limitless, but there was too much trouble in the world for one man.

The last cable was outgoing from Balkans to Budapest. It demanded the resignation of someone in the Budapest Mission named Baker. The Secretary lifted his glasses to his forehead and rubbed his eyes. It was too bad, he thought, too bad that some could not stand the strain, and must fall by the wayside. He initialed the cable. A secretary appeared and took it away. He must go home and get to bed, he thought. Tomorrow might be worse.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1

THE CABLE REACHED Budapest Tuesday morning, addressed BLANKENHORN FOR BAKER, but it was almost midnight before Jeff Baker sat down to type his answer. It had taken that long to make up his mind. Some decisions, even of life and death—such as whether to cross the street—are made in an instant. Others bear a clear sign saying “crossroads” and require thought and calculation.

The request for his resignation had hardly surprised him, but he was startled by the detail in which his sins were listed. The cable was like an indictment drawn up by a prosecuting attorney not quite sure of his case, who seeks to base an edifice of guilt upon many thin laths of accusation. It was not at all like a cable from the Secretary of State, and yet the Secretary's name was signed to it, and it could be assumed that such a cable would at least be seen by the Secretary, and initialed, before dispatching. But there was no way to be sure, for all cables from the Department bear the Secretary's name, whether they concern the drafting of a new treaty or the disposition of an old steamer trunk.

On this night candles lit his room. Whether there was a power failure, or the government was conserving electricity, or whether the lights were out in this sector of Budapest alone he did not know, and it was useless to inquire of Madame Angell or Sandor. He had placed candlesticks at each end of the long Italian desk, so that they framed his portable. The shadows shielded the imperfections

of the furnishings, rounded the angular chairs. It was a Nineteenth Century room, and it became warm and mellow in Nineteenth Century lighting. It had been his home for almost four months. In that time his belongings had found their place here, like roots in hospitable soil. Now, whatever his decision, those roots would be torn up.

Before him was this implacable sheet of flimsy—a notice of eviction, certificate of failure, diploma of disgrace. Six other paraphrased copies of the cable would have been made in the code room, and distributed, so that by now everyone in the Legation would know. He suspected this was why through the whole day he had received no phone calls and no visitors. News of the cable would have seeped to the British and the French, and even the Hungarians, during the cocktail hour at the Park Club. The cable had come in BROWN, a code which the Germans had broken in 1941 but which was still used for matters classified as less than secret because it was economical, saving wordage by compressing standard departmental phrases into single symbols. So probably the Russians would read the cable too. It would puzzle them.

The paraphrase read:

"Most disturbing information has reached the Department concerning your conduct, which appears to border on treason, in the Budapest Mission. Specifically you are charged with the following violation of State Department regulations:

"1. Without authority engaging in diplomatic negotiations with an official of a foreign power.

"2. Endangering United States policy by indiscreet utterances to an official of a foreign power.

"3. Deliberately disobeying warnings not to associate with representatives of this power.

"4. Refusal to obey direct orders of superior.

"5. Conduct unbecoming of an officer of the Foreign Service.

"6. Purloining narcotic drugs from the Mission dispensary.

"Since all these charges have been substantiated the Department regrets requiring your immediate resignation. However, in view

of your inexperience, and your previous record in the armed forces, the Department will permit you to resign without prejudice. In accordance with regulations governing such cases, passage will be furnished to your home station."

The last paragraph was the key, of course. It was an invitation to go quietly, without a fight. The rest of the cable was there simply to show him resistance was hopeless, as indeed it seemed to be.

All he had to do was write and sign a simple note of resignation and that would end it. It would sponge off the first thirty years of his life. No public stain would remain. He could go home and marry Susan. He could get a job and start over. If necessary, he could refer without shame to his short diplomatic career. It might even carry an aura of distinction. He could say, "Oh, yes, I was Third Secretary in the Legation at Budapest. Had to give it up. Not enough money in it."

Yet he could not bring himself to write his resignation. All day he had known he would not write a resignation. He could go home and get a job, but never again for his government, for in the files would be this unchallenged cable. This was peculiarly important to him. He was a Washington boy and a government boy, and all his life a career in the Department had represented honor, respectability, and security.

And he couldn't let down Leonides.

Had he been a FSS or a FSR instead of a FSO he would have been deprived of choice. Those on the staff, and in the reserve, could be fired without formality. They could be labeled security risks and fired, and they could never discover by whom they were denounced, and only generally of what they were accused. But in his case it was different. He had been appointed by the President, and confirmed by the Senate, and it would take something approximating a court-martial to get rid of him.

He could use his hearing to tell his story. Perhaps he would be believed in Washington, even if unbelievably in Budapest.

There would be the unpleasant taint of a Departmental trial. It would undoubtedly leak to the press. To have a hundred people

in Washington and Budapest know of these accusations was one thing. To have a hundred million people know was quite something else. If there was a Departmental trial, and he was not believed and fired from the Department, his name would be damaged beyond his own lifetime. So long as there were clippings in the steel morgues of newspapers, his name would be tainted. It would not be a good thing to pass on to a son.

Yet it was necessary that he fight. There was nothing else to do.

The blank paper was already in his typewriter. While it seemed no more probable that the Secretary would ever see the letter than that God should note each sparrow fallen from Heaven, he typed it in the traditional form.

"To the Secretary of State,

"Sir—

"I have the honor to report receipt of your coded cable 49122692, classified confidential. Despite this cable I find I cannot resign from the Foreign Service of the United States. I will be happy to answer the charges contained in this cable at any time, according to your convenience."

He signed his full name at the bottom, boldly, Jefferson Wilson Baker.

He yawned, stretched, and broke open his pint of emergency rye. He poured three fingers of the whiskey into a water tumbler and drank it. Then he looked again at his reply to the cable. He would deliver it to the Admiral or Morgan Collingwood in the morning.

It looked right.

2

On that Tuesday morning Horace Locke had found a young woman outside his office door. He put his key in the lock and she said, "You're Mr. Locke, aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm Locke."

"My name's Susan Pickett. I wonder whether you could see me, Mr. Locke?"

"Certainly. Come in." Hardly anyone ever visited Horace Locke, except to peddle magazine subscriptions, or ask for donations to the Community Chest or Red Cross, or to get his name on petitions. People didn't seem to have much interest or pride in past diplomatic triumphs. They didn't care what happened to the original copies of old treaties. The trouble was, of course, that what had seemed triumphs in 1921, and 1925, and 1932 now were listed as disasters. This girl seemed tense, and agitated, and he wondered what she could want. Anyway, she was pretty. He didn't often see a girl so pretty in the dour and creaking pile of Old State.

He drew up the one chair he hoped was comfortable, and held its back for her in a courtly manner long out of fashion in government offices. "Now, Miss Pickett?" he inquired. She was extraordinarily vivacious. It would have been fun, having a daughter like this. Now that it was too late, he wished he'd produced children. A man was never really dead if he had children. Long ago he had loved a woman in London, but marriage had been impossible. It was unfortunate that he was a one-love man.

"Mr. Locke," she began, "I understand you're a friend of Jeff Baker's. He's mentioned you in his letters, and he's never mentioned anyone else in the Department, and so I felt you would be his friend and I could come to you."

"More precisely, I was his father's friend," Horace Locke said.

"Oh. Maybe I shouldn't have come to you. I don't suppose you want to get mixed up in this. But I don't think he has any other friends in the Department—and he needs a friend."

"Don't mistake me," said Horace Locke. "I'm very fond of Jeff Baker—very much interested in him. Have been all his life. Are you his friend too?"

She said, "I love him."

"Oh. I can only say that Jeff has very good taste."

"Thank you, Mr. Locke. He is also in very serious trouble."

Now his thin, sensitive hands were on the desk, and he was looking at her differently than he had before, and all his instincts were alert and wary. "How do you know that?" he demanded.

She took a cigarette from her bag and tapped it on her thumb-nail, and he noticed that her nails were well shaped, but stubby from typing. He guessed she was deciding what to tell, or how much to tell, so he said, "You can tell me the whole thing, Susan Pickett. I'm on Jeff's side, and I think I know something of this too."

She put the cigarette back in her bag. "I work in the Department," she said. "Secretarial. I take the nine o'clock conference."

"This matter of Jeff's didn't come up at the conference, did it?"

"No. If it had, I couldn't talk about it."

"Of course not."

She went on, "I have a friend named Gertrude Kerns. She works in Balkans. We always have coffee together in the cafeteria after I've typed the agenda. This morning she told me Jeff was being recalled. He has been asked to resign. They sent a cable last night. She knows I know Jeff. She doesn't know how I feel about him."

"So quick," exclaimed Horace Locke. "So damnably quick!" Matson hadn't wasted an hour. Matson wanted Jeff Baker out of the Department. Locke didn't know why. He might never know. There could be so many reasons. In the internal workings of the Department there were always so many personal reasons. The Department was men, and therefore the Department possessed men's emotions, their frailties, hopes, ideals, and passions. Always hidden. Always the most secret of secrets.

Susan didn't seem to hear him. She resumed speaking, almost in a monotone. "I didn't know what to do. I told her I had a pain in my stomach and it might be appendicitis. I told her please to go to the Undersecretary's office and tell them I felt sick and couldn't take the conference. I went up to code and cipher and got a paraphrase of the cable. I suppose I'll get in trouble. I don't care. Here it is."

She had drawn a folded paper from her bag. Now she handed it across the desk.

Horace Locke read it, and read it again. "They didn't leave out anything, did they?" he murmured. He saw it was a carefully constructed cable, shrewd in semantics. It was strong enough to blast

Jeff out of Budapest, and out of the Department. It was not sufficiently specific, or important enough to the national welfare, to make further investigation necessary.

"What did you say?" Susan asked.

"Nothing. I'll handle this. I'll handle it and let you know. Now get this paraphrase back to code and cipher, and forget it."

"All right. I thank you so much, Mr. Locke. I feel better now."

He saw that she had something else to say.

"Mr. Locke, I almost didn't come here."

"I'm glad you did."

"I am too, now, but I almost didn't. I want Jeff home. I want him."

Horace Locke said, "I don't guarantee that he won't be home. I have very little influence. I can only do what I can. It may be too late already. Whatever happens in Washington, in the last analysis it will be his decision. Even with the six-hour time difference, he will already have this cable. It will have been decoded and paraphrased in the Budapest Legation, and he will have had time to answer. He may already have resigned."

"I don't think so," she said. "He'll think it over, and over, and over, if he has any chance at all. I don't know whether he can deny any of these charges. I can't believe that Jeff would endanger his country, or take dope, or disgrace the Department. I just can't believe it. If he did he'll have to quit, of course."

"I'm sure his behavior was correct," said Horace Locke. "I'm sure."

She raised her eyes to his. "You are sure, aren't you? You know something I don't know."

"Yes, I do." Naturally he couldn't tell her of the Russian business. Baker had entrusted him with important official information for official use. He could not use it for personal reassurance, and Susan Pickett's interest in this matter was personal.

"If he hasn't done these things Jeff won't quit," she said. "He mustn't quit. It would break his heart to quit. He might think he'd be the same if he resigned without prejudice. He might think

he'd be the same out of the Department. But he wouldn't, really. He'd be a different Jeff. I've thought it through. I want him to stay there and do his job. I can wait. I've waited a long time for Jeff. I can wait two years more—two years and eight months."

Horace Locke said, "I'll do my best."

She rose, and he rose and opened the door for her. As she left he could not help putting his arm around her shoulder. She needed reassurance. She didn't have to sham her inner sickness.

3

Now the time had come for Horace Locke to act. There was no use appealing to Matson now. Matson had committed himself. Only the Secretary of State could save Jeff Baker.

He dialed 3071. A pleasant voice sang, "Office of the Secretary of State."

"This is Horace Locke, in the Department. I must speak with the Secretary."

"Is he expecting your call, Mr. Locke?"

"No. But it's very important."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Locke, but I don't seem to place you. What Division are you in?"

"I'm Adviser to the Diplomatic Monuments and Memorials Commission." He tried to make it sound important, but he knew it didn't.

"Well, may I suggest you send the Secretary a memo, Mr. Locke. You know he's terribly busy. He's never been busier."

"This is really urgent, and really important," Locke said.

The girl hesitated, and then said, "Well, in that case I suggest you dial one of the Secretary's executive assistants. Their branch is 2881."

"Very well," said Horace Locke.

He dialed 2881. He didn't know any of the assistants. They were all younger. But he knew their names. He asked for Mr. Partridge. He told Mr. Partridge he had to see the Secretary immediately, on a matter pressing and of vital importance.

"Couldn't you come over and talk to me?" Partridge asked. "You know how it is, Mr. Locke. The Secretary is snowed under."

"I'll have to see the Secretary himself," Locke insisted. "This is extremely serious, and extremely confidential."

"Couldn't you give me some idea what it's about? After all, that's all I do from seven in the morning until midnight—handle stuff that is serious and confidential."

"Hold on a moment while I think it over," Locke said. If he saw Partridge he'd have to start explaining from the very beginning. And when Partridge learned it concerned the cable asking for Baker's resignation, Partridge would say it was strictly an administrative matter, and should be taken up with the Undersecretary. Partridge would conclude it was just another case of an old hand in the Department interceding for a young man who was in trouble. It was routine. Partridge would consign it to the Undersecretary, if he was convinced it should go anywhere at all. "No, Mr. Partridge," Locke said, "I can't tell you. It must go to the Secretary, and to him alone."

"Well, I'm sorry that you feel that way, Mr. Locke. I can't do anything for you. I suggest that you dictate a memo."

Horace Locke put down the telephone. He chuckled. He couldn't dictate memos. He didn't even have a stenographer. He tried to think of a way to get to the Secretary. He was still thinking at lunch.

Early in the afternoon he looked out of the window. Across the street photographers were knotting at the entrance to the executive office of the White House. The President must be better. He saw a limousine swing through the White House grounds. It was a

Rolls-Royce, and that would mean the British Ambassador. He watched other limousines stop at the executive wing. More ambassadors.

He should have remembered that this conference was today, but he now was so far removed from the center of diplomacy and politics that a conference of this kind had become of no more personal concern than if he worked in the Department of the Interior, or Agriculture. He could see the Secretary's car at the West Executive Avenue entrance. He could make out the seal on the door, the same seal that was on the ceiling over his head.

He had to see the Secretary, if he was to help Baker.

There had been a time when he could have put on his hat and crossed the street and waited in the White House executive office until the Secretary came out of the conference. Those had been the happy, informal days when government had been personal and uncomplicated, when the Secretary of State was just another member of the Cabinet. In those days the Secretary could wander around Washington and attract only casual attention.

Now the United States Secretary of State was one of the most powerful men in the world. When he spoke the earth trembled. A sentence from his lips could stop a famine in India, start a riot in Berlin, uphold the Bank of England, or cast down a government. And when he moved he was surrounded by a phalanx of assistants and bodyguards and officials waiting to pounce upon one minute of unrationed time.

It was this matter of the Secretary's time that worried Horace Locke. Would it not be presumptuous, and even rude of him, to force himself upon the Secretary? Did he have the right to decide that a number of the Secretary's priceless minutes be devoted to this matter of Jeff Baker?

Was it not presumptuous of him to assume that the Secretary was not fully informed on this matter? Perhaps Matson had already consulted with the Secretary, and the Secretary knew the full story, and the cable represented his considered judgement. If this was the case, and he forced himself upon the Secretary, it would be most

embarrassing. It would be so embarrassing that Horace Locke knew he would have to resign.

The conference across the street would last for perhaps another forty minutes. At the end of the conference the Secretary would return to his office. If he, Horace Locke, was seated in the Secretary's outer office when the Secretary came back to New State, then he'd have a chance to say something.

He must reach a decision. He tried not to think of Jeff Baker, personally, or Nicholas Baker. He tried to eliminate the importance of what was going to happen to Jeff Baker from his thought. This was the proper, the orderly way to do it. He concentrated on consideration of the importance of the letters Jeff had sent him—the letters that told of this movement inside the Russian forces.

If these facts were not known by the Secretary—and if they were true facts—how would they compare in priority and importance to all the other affairs the Secretary must consider this day? He projected himself into the position of the Secretary of State. Strangely, it was not difficult for him to do. He reached his decision. He didn't think that on this day anything could be more important than news of an anti-regime movement inside Russia.

Horace Locke put on his hat and coat and walked downstairs.

He walked through the door of the West Executive Avenue entrance. The guard nodded. He was an old guard who had always been at this entrance to Old State. "Nasty out, today, isn't it, Mr. Locke?" he said.

"Yes. It's foul."

"This Washington cold goes right through me. I'll never get used to it."

"None of us ever will," said Horace Locke.

"Now don't get a chill," the guard warned.

"Oh, don't worry, Gordon, I won't," Locke said. He went outside into the drizzle, and felt in his inside coat pocket to be sure he had Baker's letters. The Secretary's car was still there. Horace Locke caught a cab on The Avenue, and directed the driver to New State.

5

In New State he walked confidently to the Secretary's suite. Now that he had made up his mind, it would not be too difficult. In the outer office a receptionist asked his name, and he told her, and she asked whether he had an appointment. "No, but the Secretary will want to see me," he said.

She seemed puzzled by his answer. She said, "I'll send in your name, and you can wait." But she didn't seem to do anything.

That was all he wanted, a chance to wait. He took a chair in the anteroom where he could watch the door through which the Secretary must pass through his suite, and into his private office.

After he had been waiting for half an hour he sensed, by the activity, that the Secretary would soon be back. But yet another thirty minutes passed, and the Secretary did not come in. Other people came in, and were shown into the Secretary's office, and came out again.

Then Susan Pickett came in. She had a notebook and pencils in her hand. He saw her as soon as she walked in from the hallway and he lifted his head suddenly so that she noticed him and came over to him. She said, "Oh, you've got an appointment. That's fine."

He rose, and winced. The chill drizzle had loaded his joints with aches and stiffness. "No, I haven't an appointment," he whispered. "I'm just waiting for him to come back."

"Oh, he's back!" the girl said. "He's been back, Mr. Locke. He comes up on his private elevator on the other side of the building and goes directly into the inner office. He doesn't use this entrance."

Horace Locke realized suddenly how he had lost touch with what went on inside the Department. Everyone in the Department would know that the Secretary used a private elevator—everyone except himself. This was only the second time he had been in New State, and the first time he had been in the Secretary's group of offices. He

could feel his confidence ebbing. He said, "I suppose it was foolish of me, waiting for him here."

"Golly, Mr. Locke, you could wait here all day and you'd never see him," Susan said. He could see that she too was shaken, and worried. He knew that she had depended on him, that she had faith in his ability to help Jeff Baker, and now that faith was gone. It was gone simply because he had not known the mechanics of the Secretary's entrance.

"I'm going in to see him in a minute," Susan said. "I have to see him every day at this time. He dictates part of tomorrow's agenda. I told everybody I felt better and was able to work. I don't know why. I had to. I guess I can't stand not knowing what's going on. Would it do any good if I told him you were here?"

Horace Locke considered this. "I'm afraid not," he said.

She said, "What would happen if you went in with me?" Her eyes, which had been so dull, now suddenly were alight.

"What do you mean?"

"I could take you in with me, just like I'd been sent out to get you. I go in and out so much nobody notices."

Horace Locke knew he was going to perform what for him was a desperate act. In his whole life he had never entered an office, a drawing room, or any gathering where by any chance he might be unwelcome. He said, "I will go in with you."

She caught her breath. "I don't suppose the world will come to an end if we do," she said. She smiled, and Horace Locke admired her. He had not known many women who were unorthodox and daring, but those he remembered were the most charming women he had known.

So together they walked into the Secretary's office. They walked past the receptionist, and the uniformed guard at the double doors, and through the secretarial office inside, and into the Secretary's presence. Everyone could see that Susan Pickett was escorting a friend of the Secretary into his office, and nobody thought it unusual.

The Secretary was alone. His shoulders were bowed over his desk and his glasses had slipped down the bridge of his nose. His eyes, as always, were chained to the pile of red-tabbed papers before him. He looked up over his spectacles, started to speak to Susan, and saw Horace Locke. He did not seem disturbed, but he did seem puzzled.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary," Horace Locke said. He was at ease again. His confidence had returned now. He could be rattled by picayune indignities, because he was not accustomed to them, and hopelessly entangled in the fresh crops of red tape that grew each new year in the Department, but when it came to a matter of discussion with a man on his own intellectual level, then he was at ease.

"Well, hello Locke—Horace," the Secretary said. "Good to see you. Haven't seen each other in some time, have we?"

"No, we haven't," said Horace Locke.

"How've you been?"

"Fine, thank you, Mr. Secretary." He knew what would be passing through the Secretary's head. The Secretary would be thinking he must have some appointment with Locke, and yet he would be quite certain he didn't, and he wouldn't want to be rude, and so he would wait and find out, from the conversation, what it was all about.

Horace Locke plunged. "Mr. Secretary, I don't have any appointment, but I had to see you. I had to see you at once. First I want to apologize for the intrusion, but after we've talked I'm sure you'll agree it was necessary."

The Secretary took off his glasses and laid them on the desk. "Well, what is it, Horace? I assume it must be of surpassing importance. You know how unusual this is."

"It is an affair of state, Mr. Secretary." The words rolled out rounder and bigger in this office than if said anywhere else. For them both it had a special meaning. An affair of state was a matter of the national safety.

Now Susan thought she had to say something. For the first time since she had been employed in the Secretary's office she felt like an eavesdropper. This affair of state was not for her impersonal. "Mr. Secretary," she asked in a small voice, "do you want me to come back later?"

"No, Mrs. Pickett, I want you to stay and make notes. All right, Horace, go ahead."

Horace Locke brought out Jeff's letters. "Mr. Secretary," he said, "I have received two letters safe hand from Budapest. They were sent to me out of channel by a Third Secretary who because of my long association with his family trusted me implicitly. It was the opinion of this Third Secretary, in which I concur, that the matter was of a nature so secret that the information could not pass through ordinary channels. The letters concern this Third Secretary's liaison with a Russian officer who claims to be a leader of a revolutionary group which intends to fight, and if possible overthrow, the present Soviet regime."

Horace Locke paused. It was best to present it factually and without involving personalities. If the Secretary already knew of this thing, and had discarded it as impossible or a fabrication, then the Secretary would tell him. He would apologize, then, and he would go home, and he would resign from the Department.

But he could see in the Secretary's face that this was fresh intelligence. "Sit down, Horace," the Secretary said, "and let me see those letters."

Horace Locke sat down. He knew now that he had his chance. He decided it would be best to read the letters, because he knew that the Secretary's eyes were always tired from too much reading, and he would grasp it more quickly, and perhaps more completely, if the letters were read. "I think we can save time if I read them," Locke said.

"Yes, do. Go ahead," the Secretary agreed. He turned to Susan. "You'll take all this, please, Mrs. Pickett. Girl, why are you shaking?"

"Oh, I didn't know I was shaking," Susan said.

"You weren't at the nine o'clock conference today, were you? Wasn't there another girl there?"

"Yes, sir. I didn't feel well. I'm all right now."

"Are you sure you're all right? If you're not feeling well, Mrs. Pickett, I can buzz for another girl."

"Oh, I'm absolutely all right!" Susan insisted.

The Secretary frowned. A young girl could be as peculiar and puzzling and impenetrable as Molotov. "All right, go ahead, Horace."

Ten minutes later the Secretary touched a key on his interphone and said, "No more appointments until I let you know."

7

When it was all finished the Secretary said, "I suppose, Horace, that you know I signed a cable last night asking that boy to resign?"

"Yes, Mr. Secretary. That's why it was so urgent that I bring the matter to your attention." Horace Locke hoped the Secretary wouldn't ask how he knew Jeff Baker was being recalled because if the Secretary did ask he wasn't going to tell him. But the Secretary would understand that his Department did not operate on a basis purely official. The Secretary would remind himself, as Horace Locke did so often, that the Department was not buildings and files and code machines and typewriters. The Department was people.

The Secretary must have thought of this, because he said, "I think you were perfectly correct, Horace." He tapped a pen on his desk, as if rapping out points in his reasoning. "There is a very weak point in Baker's story. There is no corroboration. There is no corroboration from anywhere in the world. Perhaps Baker himself can furnish that corroboration. We will see. He will have a hearing. I will talk to him."

"Thank you, Mr. Secretary," Horace Locke said. He glanced at Susan Pickett. She was containing herself beautifully now. She was a lady, in the sense that a man was a gentleman. She was a diplomat.

The Secretary rose and held out his hand. "Thank you, Horace. I'll take care of this now. I'm going to check with our people in Vienna, and with the British in Klagenfurt, and of course with Budapest. And I'm bringing Baker home."

As Horace Locke left the office he heard the Secretary speak into the interphone. "Have Mr. Matson up here at once."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1

JEFF SLEPT LATE Wednesday morning, and when he awoke he smoked a cigarette in bed and considered what he must do next. He decided he must present his answer to the cable to Morgan Collingwood. That was correct protocol. Collingwood would take it in to the Admiral, and the Admiral would snort at it, and then order it transmitted to Washington.

After that it would be Washington's move. His refusal to resign would go to the Balkan desk. Undoubtedly Matson would send another cable, ordering him home to face a Departmental trial. They probably wouldn't bother to bring him home by air. They'd furnish the most inconvenient transportation available—jeep to Vienna, trains to Genoa, and then an Army transport or freighter to Newport News. It would take weeks.

When he got back to Washington—he didn't like to think of it. He showered and dressed automatically while his mind retraced all the arguments of the day before, and reached the same conclusion. He had nothing else to do.

Madame Angell brought his hot water, and he was drinking his black coffee when the phone rang. It was Quincy Todd. "So you're finally there," Todd said. "I tried to get you all last night. What's the matter with your phone?"

"I don't know," Jeff said. "I didn't have lights last night either, so I guess wires were down somewhere. What'd you want?"

"Oh, I just wanted to offer liquid courage and consolation. Now it may be different. You just got another cable. My little mouse told me."

"I'll be right down," Jeff said.

2

Jeff folded his reply to the cable into an envelope, and put it in his pocket with the cable itself. Then he walked to the Legation, and went to the message center. Quincy Todd was waiting there, and with him was Marge Collins, from cryptography. She looked pleased. Quincy said, "I think she's got good news for you, Jeff, but she won't tell me."

She had an envelope in her hand. "I'll give you this cable," she said, "but first you have to give me back the paraphrase you got yesterday."

"Why?" he asked. "It's mine, isn't it?"

"Not any more. I've got orders to destroy it. You'll see."

Jeff brought the sheet of flimsy out of his coat pocket and handed it to her, and she gave him the envelope.

"Well, hurry up and open it," Quincy Todd said.

Jeff opened the envelope. It was addressed as before. It read:

DEPARTMENT'S 49122692 CLASSIFIED CONFIDENTIAL IS TO BE
DISREGARDED AND ORIGINAL AND ALL COPIES AND PARAPHRASES
REMOVED FROM FILES AND DESTROYED. BAKER IS TO RETURN TO
WASHINGTON ON FIRST PLANE AVAILABLE AND REPORT IMMEDI-
ATELY TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

Quincy Todd, who unashamedly had been reading over his shoulder, slammed him on the back and said, "Saved! You must have a cousin in Congress. When I heard about the one yesterday I thought they'd hang you."

"They may hang me yet," Jeff said. He musn't let his hopes run away with his common sense. He guessed that Horace Locke must have done something. Horace Locke must have reached the Secre-

tary, or this cable wouldn't be ordering him to report to the Secretary. So the Secretary must know of his letters to Locke. The Secretary must know of Leonides. Whatever happened now, that vicious cable was destroyed. It did not necessarily mean the charges had been withdrawn, but at least they were held in abeyance. Back in Washington somebody had given him a fighting chance. "That means tomorrow's plane, doesn't it?" he said.

"Yes, tomorrow's plane," Quincy Todd said. "You'd better stick around the Legation, because the Admiral will be wanting to talk to you."

"You think so?"

Todd smiled. "I certainly do."

3

The Admiral had him at his table at lunch. The Admiral was affable and pleasant and very nearly apologetic. Jeff felt that the Admiral must believe he had powerful friends in Washington.

Actually the Admiral was congratulating himself on passing the buck to the Department. Something was going on back in Washington that he didn't understand, and it was best that he stay out of it. Whatever happened, the Navy would be pleased that he had not involved himself in a State Department affair. He was concerned with policy, not administration, and this had become an administrative matter.

4

Jeff saw Keller that evening. "When you see the Secretary," Fred cautioned him, "simply present the facts as you know them. Don't be frightened. The Secretary's very decent, very human."

"I wonder if he remembers me?" Jeff said. "I wonder if he remembers when I took my orals?"

"He never forgets anyone," Keller said. "His memory is phenomenal. He sops up knowledge, and facts, and he never forgets any of it. In a matter of this kind he'll consider only the cold facts."

But at least you know you're going to get a square shake. That's the important thing."

That night Jeff went to the Arizona with Keller and Todd, and they watched Rikki Telredy dance. She smiled at them from the stage, but when the show was over she didn't go to their table. She had drinks with some Russian colonels, and chatted at a table occupied by Polish diplomats, and finally left with a Hungarian drama critic. Keller said Rikki was a smart girl—very smart. Keller said to Jeff, "She'll still be here when you come back."

"Do you really think I'll be coming back?" Jeff asked. He knew that he wanted to come back. He didn't want to be a liquor salesman, or a school teacher, or a peddler of used automobiles, or even be rich. He wanted to be in the Foreign Service.

"I think you'll be coming back," Keller said. "I think you'll be coming back, and that I'll be leaving, because I think our job is finished here. I think there will be more productive work for us."

"I wish you guys wouldn't talk in riddles," Quincy Todd said. "But one day I'll have my revenge. One day I'll stop being nursemaid to this Legation. One day I'll have some other job. And I don't care what it is I'm going to be mysterious about it. I'll be so mysterious that nobody will know what I'm doing. Everybody will think it's real important, and so I'll get to be a Class Three, or maybe even a Two."

5

Thursday morning Quincy Todd helped him pack. When they were finished Todd asked Jeff about the maps that covered an enormous footage of wall. They were beautiful maps. They were Army Air Force aeronautical charts of the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, of The Straits and the Baltic, of inner Europe and the Danube. They had been part of Jeff's existence ever since Charley Born had presented them to him in Bari. It had been better than receiving a medal. Jeff said, "I think I'll leave them here for a while."

"I like your confidence," Quincy said.

"Oh, I'm not so confident," Jeff said. "I'm just tired of taking 'em down and putting 'em up. And if things turn out bad I won't want them anyway."

"I'll take care of them," Quincy promised, "one way or another." Jeff left on the evening plane.

6

When Jeff arrived in Washington he called the Secretary's office from the airport. The girl said, "Oh, Mr. Baker. I've a message for you. The Secretary left instructions that if you came in in the morning he'd see you at eleven. Can you make it?"

Jeff looked at his watch. He had thirty minutes. "I can make it," he said.

He checked his bags and went to the washroom and washed his face and combed his hair. He was glad he'd had the foresight to shave on the plane, but there was nothing he could do about his suit. When you slept in one position across an ocean then your suit simply announced that it had been slept in.

He got in a cab and said "New State" and looked again at his watch. He'd be on time.

He wondered if he'd run into Susan in the Department. He wondered if she had heard anything. He wondered if she knew anything at all of what had happened. He kept thinking of what he should tell the Secretary first, and discovered that he lacked any plan of what to say.

He reached New State and walked to the elevators, and his elevator was crowded and stopped at every floor. Everyone in the elevator looked so neat and freshly cleaned. He felt they must be noticing his suit, and the crushed collar of his shirt, and the wrinkled tie. They'd never guess he was thirty minutes off a plane from Budapest. But then, who knew where these other people had come from? Perhaps Saigon or B.A. or Hong Kong or the Mayflower Hotel. In Washington you never knew.

He got off at the fifth floor and gave his name to the receptionist,

and he could tell he was expected, for she said, "Just a moment, Mr. Baker." She lifted her phone and said, "Mr. Baker is here," and another girl came out and said, "The Secretary will see you now, Mr. Baker." It was happening too fast. He wasn't getting a chance to think.

He followed the girl through the secretarial office, and there were four other girls sitting there typing, and one of them was Susan. Her back was turned towards him and he wanted to yell at her, but of course he didn't dare.

7

The Secretary got up when he came in and extended his hand, and said, "I'm glad to see you again, Baker," and he sounded as if he really was glad to see him. "Just sit down," the Secretary said. He told the girl, "No calls until I let you know."

The girl left, and he was alone with the Secretary.

There was a cable file at the edge of the desk, and now the Secretary drew it to him. "Good trip?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," Jeff said. "I slept all the way across."

"I never seem to have time to sleep on a plane," the Secretary said. "Every trip I make I tell myself I'm going to take a rest, and sleep all the way, but it never turns out like that. There are always papers, always more papers."

The Secretary glanced at the top papers in the file. "Now, Baker," he said, "to save time I'll tell you what I've done, and then when I'm finished you can add anything you want, and I'll have some questions to ask you.

"In the first place I've talked to Matson and Quigley and Locke, and they've told me all they know of this matter. I want to apologize to you for one thing, Baker. I wouldn't have initialed the cable requesting your resignation had I known at the time what I know now. I'm not blaming Mr. Matson for this. It is nobody's fault but my own. However, that doesn't mean that I may not request your

resignation at the end of this interview. I'm just telling you that I initialed the cable without having complete information."

"I see, sir," Jeff said.

"After learning all I could in Washington I cabled our Embassy in Moscow, our occupation headquarters in Vienna, and the British in Klagenfurt. I requested any information that would corroborate your story." The Secretary took three priority cable forms from the file. Those must be the replies, Jeff thought, and he knew that they were critical for him.

"Briefly," the Secretary went on, "Moscow has never heard of any organized revolutionary movement in the Red Army or the Soviet diplomatic corps. Neither has Vienna. I am taking into account the probability that they might be the last to hear. But the important reply came from the British Zone in Austria. They are certain that nobody answering the description of Leonides Lasenko has crossed into their zone. They know nothing of any underground transmitters operating in the Hochschwab. They do have a good many Russian deserters who have taken refuge in their zone, but then, so have we."

"Oh, that's too bad," Jeff said. He wasn't thinking of himself. He was thinking of Leonides. He tried to follow, in his mind, the route that Leonides and Marina, the gypsy girl, had taken out of Budapest towards the sanctuary in the Hochschwab. Perhaps the gypsies moved slowly. Perhaps they were very careful. Leonides said the gypsies alone knew how to run a border. He hoped Leonides was right.

"I do have one small fact to back your story," the Secretary said. "It is a fact that the Russian Naval Attaché, Yassovsky, was recalled to Moscow and has since disappeared. But that happens to a lot of Russians. So you can understand, Baker, the position I am in. If your story about Major Lasenko and his underground was provable, then I would naturally believe your story about the penetration of Atlantis Project—which incidentally was quite a blow to us—and about everything else."

"I understand, sir," Jeff said. He wished his mind was sharper.

His mind seemed numb, as if it had surrendered under the impact of the cables from Moscow, Vienna, and Klagenfurt. His mind had given up.

The Secretary lifted his head so that Jeff could see how grave and serious were the eyes behind the spectacles. He said, "I hope your story is true, Baker. It would be a great thing for us—for all of us, and I include the Russians—if it is true. If there are people within the Soviet Union who are willing to risk their lives for peace, then I would be confident of peace. I have not abandoned hope in any case, but such a thing would hearten me greatly. Is it true, Baker?"

"It is, sir."

"You are sure of this Major Lasenko?"

"I am, sir."

"Can you show me any proof—any small proof?"

Jeff shook his head. "This proof doesn't exist, sir. I can only give you my word and my judgment."

"And your judgment is immature," the Secretary said.

"I don't think it's so immature," Jeff said. "I think men my age grew up awfully fast."

The Secretary leaned back in his chair, and examined this statement. "In most cases that's true," he said. "But I'm not sure in your case. You see, Baker, your reaction to that explosion indicates that you might be a psycho. Now understand that I am sympathetic with men who suffered battle fatigue, but I must take this into account."

"I know it, Mr. Secretary," Jeff said. He hoped the Secretary would notice how calm he was. He added, "I'm not certain, but I don't believe I could ever go to pieces again."

"I hope not, but as you say, you're not certain. And we have to be certain of our men, Baker. Particularly in a question like this—which I believe is a major question—we have to be certain."

Jeff knew that the cards had fallen against him. He had not been fully prepared for the worst, the worst was happening, and yet he found he could maintain his nerve, his calm, and his courage. He felt inwardly pleased with himself that this was possible. He said, "Mr. Secretary, I suppose you will want my resignation."

"I think that would be best for us," the Secretary said. "I was not going to demand your resignation, but since you yourself suggest it I think it would be best. If you remained, I could not under the circumstances entrust you with responsibilities fitting your ability. You would not like that."

"No, I wouldn't like that. But before I give you my resignation, Mr. Secretary, there is something I must submit. Please, Mr. Secretary, do not allow the Atlantis Project to continue. Because if you do, Mr. Secretary, it will cost lives. Some of our friends in Budapest will surely die."

The Secretary rose. "I'm going to accept your suggestion, Baker," he said, "but I'm also going to accept your resignation. Good luck, Baker."

"Goodbye, Mr. Secretary."

As he walked out of the Secretary's office he was aware that the traffic of the State Department had congested in the outer offices while he had been inside. He realized that this matter which for him meant his whole life and his whole world was only twenty minutes out of one day for the Secretary of State.

8

In the outer office Susan was still at her desk, and now she was watching for him. He tried to smile at her, and she tried to smile back. She said, across the room, "I'm off at five."

He said, "I'll see you at five."

He didn't think that anybody noticed. He hoped not. He didn't want to embarrass her. He realized that henceforth his association with her would embarrass her in the Department. From now on, he was an outsider, and branded unreliable.

He knew something else, too. He knew that she knew. She could tell by his face. He didn't have a poker face, or a diplomatic face.

He went back to the airport and got his bags and dumped them in Stud Beecham's apartment. He could tell by the neatness that Stud was off somewhere on a field trip, and the maid had finally caught up with the disorder. He was glad Stud was away. He would have to explain to a great many people, and in every case it would be difficult, even with Stud.

He bathed, and sent out a suit to be pressed, and fashioned a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and washed it down with milk, and then he sat down at Stud's desk and wrote his resignation.

"To the Secretary of State

"Sir:

"Pursuant to our conversation of even date I have the honor to inform you that I am resigning from the Foreign Service of the United States."

It was an archaic way of saying I quit, true, and yet the words seemed to possess their own majesty.

And once again he signed his full name, Jefferson Wilson Baker. He mailed the resignation in the letter box at Dupont Circle.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

1

HE WAS WAITING at the Virginia Avenue entrance of New State when she came out. When he saw her his eyes became camera-like in their precision. She was sharp, and everyone else pouring down the steps of New State at the quitting hour was out of focus.

She came directly to him, her steps never hesitating, and she put her arms around his neck and they kissed right there at the corner of Twenty-first Street and Virginia Avenue, Northwest. In front of God and everybody.

People stopped to stare. There was something of a jam at the entrance to New State. Washington is not like Paris, or New York. In Washington it is not good form to display affection in public. In Washington love is almost a bad word.

2

That evening he took her down to the waterfront for lobster. She had suggested that they eat at her apartment, but he didn't want to do that. He was afraid that if he went to her apartment his resolution would dissolve, and they would spend little time eating. He had made his decision, it had been difficult, and it would only make it harder to tell her if they were alone in her apartment.

There was an hour spent in explanation of what he had done, and what she had done, and what both had left undone. And then there was the critical moment when she asked:

"Jeff, what about us? Where do we go from here?"

"Let's go to the Footlight Club," he evaded. He knew he had to end it, and yet he wanted all of this last evening.

"You know that's not what I mean."

"I know."

"What happens to us now, Jeff—you and me?"

Now the time had come. Now he had to tell her. "I'm afraid this is our last time together, Susan," he said.

"Jeff!"

She seemed startled and shocked as if he had struck her in the face, and yet he could not believe that it was this much of a surprise to her. She must sense, she must know that a man who had just resigned, by request, was not the same man who was beginning his career in The Department. "That's the way it has to be, Susan dear."

"But why? Why, Jeff?"

"Lots of reasons." It was terribly difficult to put them into words. Could he say that he would be a bitter man, and a bad husband who envied his wife's work? Could he explain that he couldn't bear to live in Washington any more? Could he tell why he would want to avert his head every time he passed the Department of State? For one career alone he had been prepared, and now that career was gone as finally as if he had passed the age of retirement. And she was to have been part of that career.

She leaned across the table and took his hand in both her hands, and held tight to his hand. "You're not thinking straight, Jeff," she said.

"Yes I am thinking straight."

"No you're not." She was trying to speak lightly and with confidence. "You're out of the Department now and we can get married. I want to marry you. I want to be with you every night, Jeff."

He tried to pull his hand away but she clung to him. "It wouldn't work that way, Susan. You marry me and you know what'd happen?"

"We'd live happily ever after."

"No we wouldn't, Susan dear. You'd find yourself transferred to being stenographer on the Costa Rica desk. They wouldn't let you take the nine o'clock conference any more. They'd put you in a

cubbyhole for life. They don't want women in sensitive jobs whose husbands have been kicked out of the Department with a mark on them."

"You haven't any mark, Jeff."

"Yes I have. Nobody will say so, and nobody will speak of it, but I have a mark."

The grip on his hand relaxed, and he drew it away. "My darling," she said, "my Jeff. I don't care if I have to work on the Costa Rica desk, or even if they put me in the International Boundary Commission, or the Hemp and Flax Policy Board."

He shook his head, and she thought how much older he looked. He had grown up, attained maturity and mature judgment. "You think you wouldn't care," he said, "but you would. Just as I am going to care. There will be no moment when I will not wish I was back in the Department. I'll get a job all right, and I'll have enough money for myself, and outwardly there won't be any blemish on me. But inside I'll never feel right."

"Oh, Jeff."

He knew she was beginning to understand, as Rikki had understood. He was poison. "Can you imagine how it would be," he went on, "if you still had a job in the Department and we still lived in Washington and we invited our friends in the Department to a cocktail party, or dinner? They'd clam up. They'd be afraid to talk in front of me. I'm an outcast, Susan."

"I can quit. We can go away, Jeff," she said.

"No, Susan."

"You don't have to be married to me to live with me," she said.

"That won't help. That'd be worse. That isn't the way we were supposed to live, Susan."

She saw she was defeated. She lowered her head so he could not see the defeat in her eyes. "Pay the check," she said quietly, "and take me home."

As they went out of the door she said, "Jeff, you forgot your hat."

He put his hand on the top of his head, awkwardly, as if he expected a hat to grow there. "I guess I didn't have it on tonight," he said. "I must have left it somewhere."

CHAPTER TWENTY

1

THE CENTURY PASSED its halfway mark, and raced onward towards its destiny.

One night late in January, at eleven o'clock Central European Time and five in the afternoon Eastern Standard Time, a new short-wave radio station went on the air in Europe. It called itself RFR—for Radio Free Russia—and it pirated a wave length in the eleven megacycle band, right next to Radio Moscow, so that everyone who customarily listened to Moscow heard it.

It caused quite a sensation, because it was the first Russian resistance radio.

2

Madame Angell was among the first to hear it in Budapest.

She didn't remember when she had been so excited, and yet there was no one to tell except Sandor, the building superintendent and elevator operator, who naturally wouldn't believe her.

She put on her tattered and stained wrapper and rushed out into the hallway, not that she expected to find anyone there, but simply because she felt she must do something.

The room that had been occupied by Mr. Baker was still vacant. Mr. Todd had paid the rent for January, as if he expected Mr. Baker to come back. She entered this vacant room. She hadn't made a thorough inspection of the room since Mr. Baker left, and now was as good a time as any. Mr. Baker had always been so attentive

when she brought him the news. She had liked Mr. Baker. And who could tell, the American might have forgotten some candy, or a package of sugar?

It was peculiar that he hadn't bothered to take down his maps. She examined the maps carefully, and she recognized that they were very good maps. How wonderful it would be if she herself had those maps! How much more the international broadcasts would mean with maps such as these.

Yet she dared not take them down, for fear Mr. Todd might come and see they were missing.

She looked in the bureau drawers. Sure enough, there was half a chocolate bar under a newspaper. She took a bite, and put the remaining fragment in the pocket of her wrapper. She wished either Mr. Baker would come back, or Mr. Todd would get her another American. She missed her sweets.

She looked in the closet. There was a shape in the top of the closet. She reached up and took a hat off the top shelf. It was Mr. Baker's black homburg. She was aware that it was the only hat Mr. Baker had and she wondered how he could be so careless as to forget it.

She scurried out of the room and back into her own apartment, taking the hat with her. It was, anyone could see, an expensive American hat, a diplomat's hat. It would bring a fancy price on the Black Bourse. One didn't see hats like this in Budapest, except on the heads of foreign diplomats. It would, she estimated, bring three hundred forints. That was a considerable sum of money.

Yet she hesitated to sell it. She had a premonition that Mr. Baker was coming back, and if she kept his hat for him, he would reward her with sweets, and that was better than money.

Madame Angell put the hat into her own closet, and listened again to this fascinating new station, that was Russian and yet was not Russian.

3

Others were listening.

In the American Legation on the Szabadzag-tér a bi-lingual moni-

tor was taking it off the air. He soon knew it was important enough to be recorded, and switched on the recording machine.

In Klagenfurt the monitors of the British Political Warfare Executive were listening. The signal of RFR was very strong in Klagenfurt, and the chief monitor ordered that other stations in the British Zone of Austria tune it in, and obtain a triangulation, for he suspected that the transmitter was very close.

In addition he had a watch order for such a station. London had wanted to know whether such a station existed. London had said Washington was curious. He had replied that no such station had ever been on the air in his area. Up to now, he had been right. Washington must have known something.

In the morning he would draft a synopsis of these broadcasts and telegraph them to London, although he suspected that the transmitter was sufficiently powerful to be heard both in London and across the Atlantic.

It was heard in London. A complete text was recorded, quickly transcribed, and sent to Whitehall, with a copy to Washington. This was an unusual matter.

It was even heard in Washington. Out on the Maryland capes the monitors of Central Intelligence Agency, dialing for Radio Moscow, had picked up this RFR instead. They missed the first few minutes of the broadcast, but they kept themselves eagerly tuned to the rest. And they recorded it, and prepared to send a special bulletin to the War, Navy, Air and State Departments so they'd have it in the morning.

The CIA cabled its people abroad for additional information.

4

Radio Moscow was the first to react to the new transmitter. At two in the morning, in a Hindu broadcast to India, Moscow said:

"The desperate Anglo-American political warfare offensive has just tried an infamous trick. Using a British station in the British Zone

of Austria they now pretend to be the mouthpiece of a Russian counter-revolutionary movement.

"There is no counter-revolutionary movement against the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. No such station as RFR actually exists. It is most contemptible. At no time since Lenin overthrew the Czarist regime has there ever been such complete accord and tranquility within the Soviet state."

When they heard Moscow's denial the British in London and Klagenfurt, and the Americans in Budapest and Washington knew that RFR was genuine. It was the goods. They got their propaganda planners out of bed to tell them the news, and lay plans to capitalize on this crack within the Soviet ranks.

5

Admiral Blankenhorn heard of it at breakfast. When his Filipino mess boy brought breakfast to the Admiral's bedroom he also brought a summary of the night's news, and the monitoring report, the mimeographed paper still damp, from the Legation.

On this day there was a special box drawn on top of the monitoring report, headed "BULLETIN."

It read:

"A new short wave station with a very strong signal came on the air last night with news and propaganda especially directed to Russian troops in the occupied areas. Its call letters are RFR—for Radio Free Russia. It also calls itself the station of the Second Russian Revolution.

"This new station claims to represent a group of Soviet military men and government people. It says that an underground battle against the present regime has been going on.

"A portion of the broadcast was devoted to a memorial to those men, who, this station claims, have already died for the Second Russian Revolution. It mentioned twenty or more names, but of special interest to this post were the names of Yassovsky, former Naval Attaché, and a Major Leonides Lasenko, who had been stationed in

Budapest, according to the broadcast. According to the broadcast Yassovsky was murdered after torture at a Black Sea naval base, and Lasenko was shot to death while trying to cross the border into the British Zone of Austria. Also named as a hero was an unidentified gypsy girl who supposedly gave her life trying to lead Lasenko to safety . . ."

The Admiral didn't read any further. A good commander expected the unexpected. On occasion the Admiral hadn't been a good commander. There were ships in Iron Bottom Bay to prove that. But he was learning.

The Admiral thought it over very carefully as he had his two poached eggs on toast, frozen orange juice, and small cup of coffee. And when he went down to the Legation he drafted a cable to the Secretary of State:

"I have always had greatest confidence in Jefferson W. Baker and for this reason felt that his story, improbable as it may have seemed at the time, be brought to your personal attention.

"In view of today's developments I feel that Budapest is the logical place in which to initiate liaison with the Russian group fighting against the present Soviet regime. I also feel that Baker, working under Keller's direction, would be the logical man to undertake such liaison. Naturally operations of the other project which must be unnamed have been discontinued ever since I talked to Baker."

This was what was known, in military parlance, as seizing the initiative. The Admiral didn't want to be returned to Navy yet. If he was returned to Navy now they'd put him in command of an inactive fleet. They'd give him a battleship as a flagship all right, but the chances were that it would be an old battleship. It might even have been used at Bikini, and therefore be so radioactive that neither he nor anyone else could safely board it. It would be much better, for the time being, to remain in Budapest.

Jeff Baker read the news in *The Post*. He had gone around the corner to the little breakfast shop on Connecticut Avenue, and he'd bought a *Post* on the way so he could go through the help wanted ads. He didn't really think he'd get a decent job out of the ads, but whenever he read them they gave him ideas. It wasn't tough to get a job—a job—but it was hard finding a job he thought he'd like.

He sat down on a stool in the breakfast shop and ordered a pineapple juice and ham and egg sandwich, and first black coffee. He would drink this first coffee, and then he'd read and eat, and then he'd have another coffee, as was his custom. He opened *The Post* and looked at the front page headlines. Headlines are so impersonal. It takes a long time for you to understand that a headline can be personal. Like this one-column headline on the first page:

"FREE RUSSIA RADIO
TAKES AIR; PLEDGES
DEMOCRATIC ACTION"

He read it three times before he realized it might be personally interesting.

Then he raced through the banks, and the lead, and came to the paragraph about Leonides being killed, and he couldn't eat any more.

The waitress said, "Whattsa matter, bad egg?"

He said, "Oh, no. The egg's all right." He wanted to get out of there. He wanted to be by himself. He left a dollar on the counter, which was more than his usual payment and tip, and left. He went back to the apartment on Riggs Court. He lay full length on the bed, face down with his toes hanging over the end, and cried. In the course of a lifetime a man has so few real friends that when he loses one it is as if he himself had died a little.

Jeff's mind distorted the first impact of the news, the way minds will when emotion elbows out cold logic. His first thought was that

with Leonides dead he'd never be able to prove what he had told. Then he began to understand that the broadcast itself was proof.

He had a tendency to feel elated. He had a bloated "I told you so" feeling. He tried to fight down this feeling, but he felt he must talk to someone. Stud had now left for the office. It was not yet ten o'clock so Susan would still be in her conference. He hadn't seen Susan. Now he wanted to see her.

There was Horace Locke. He dialed the State Department, and asked for Locke's extension, and Locke answered. He said, "Hello, this is Jeff Baker. Mr. Locke, did you see the story about the Russian broadcast—I mean about RFR like I told you?"

"I saw it," Horace Locke said calmly. "I was just going to call you."

"Well, what do you think about it, Mr. Locke?"

"I think this is an excellent time for you to contain yourself. You were right. But it is not enough that you be right. You must accept your rightness gracefully and diplomatically. You've won a victory, Jeff, but you mustn't gloat."

"I don't quite get it," Jeff said.

"Think it over," said Horace Locke, "and I think you'll get it. It's quite simple. You've got to be a diplomat. You can be tough now. You're on top. But if you're smart you'll be generous."

"Yes, sir," Jeff said. He thought it over, and he understood what Horace Locke meant.

7

Gerald Matson heard of the broadcast. The news of it went through every Division of the Department, even into the Visa Division. Matson didn't quite know why he was in Visa, instead of Chief of Balkans.

He had taken a backward step. Quigley, the security man, had talked to him, and talked to Anya, and even talked to Iggy. Everything had been pleasant, and conducted in what the Department called a "good atmosphere," but Matson knew he was through, finito, kaput.

The Secretary of State learned of the broadcast, and of Moscow's reaction, at the nine o'clock conference. Usually the Secretary plucked his early morning news out of Art Godfrey's broadcast. But on this morning he overslept and missed Godfrey.

The news was on the top of the Secretary's nine o'clock conference file. Usually the monitoring reports were on the bottom, for they were considered of less importance than the spot news, and the cables from London, Berlin, Rome, Paris, and Moscow. But on this day the girl who arranged his file—Mrs. Pickett—had somehow managed the file so that the monitoring reports met his eye first.

The Secretary looked at this thing, and digested it. All its potentialities were instantly clear to him. He knew that what some of his advisers had said could not happen, had happened nevertheless. He sought a parallel in history, and found it easily. People had said the Japanese would never surrender, that the Japanese were monolithic and would fight fanatically to the last man. But Zacharias and Mashbir had contended otherwise. They'd said the Japanese were human beings, and being human had no love of death. The Russians too were human.

The Secretary's thought changed from politics to people. He said, "Where's Jeff Baker?"

Everybody was silent. Nobody knew.

"What happened to Baker?" the Secretary demanded. "Where is he?"

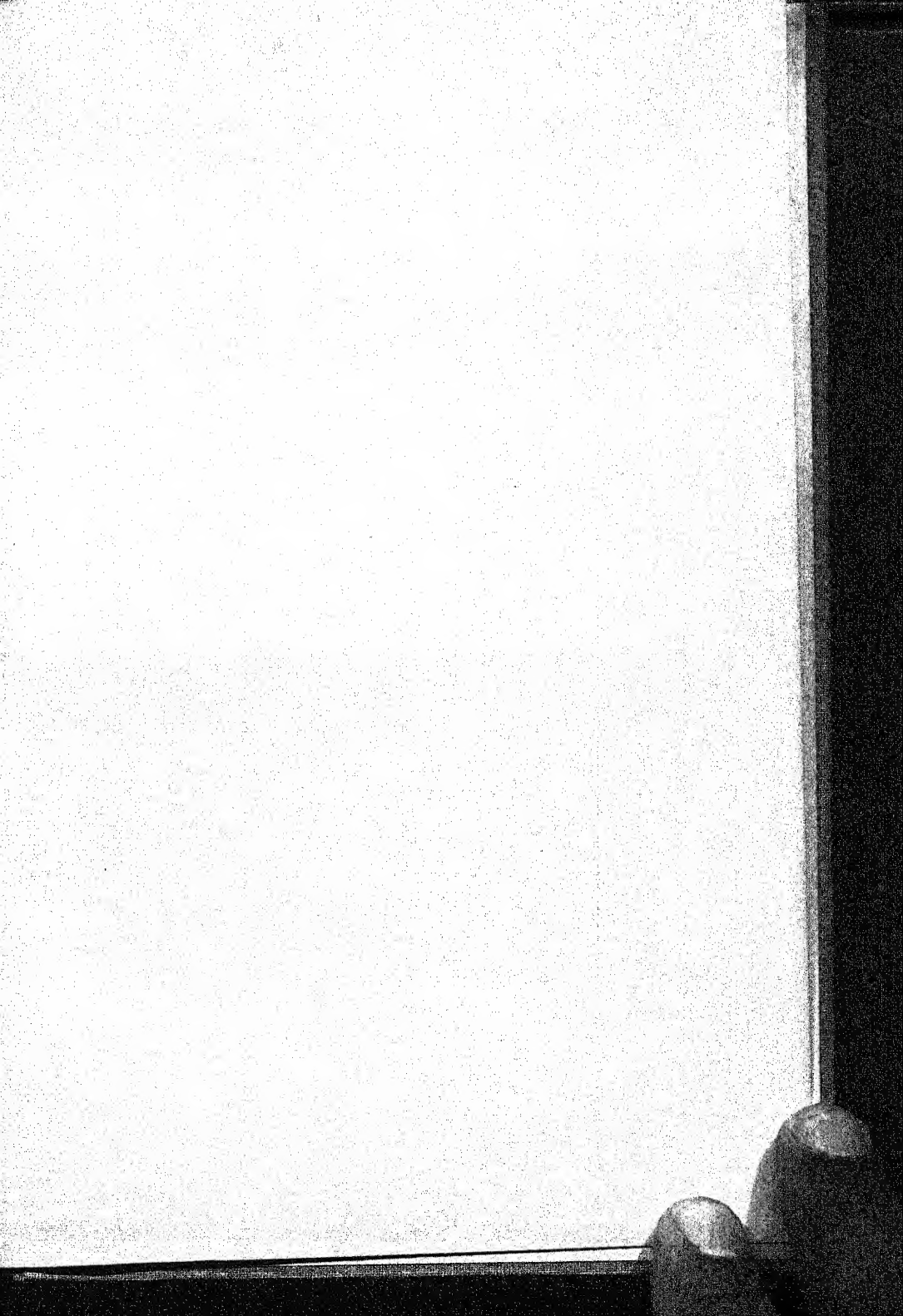
Nobody said anything except the girl who took the nine o'clock conference and all she said was, "I know where he is, Mr. Secretary."

"I'd like to see him," the Secretary said, "after the conference."

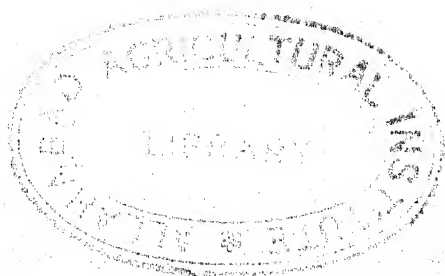
Everybody at the conference—the Undersecretary, and the Assistant Secretaries, and the Chiefs of Division, and the Special Planners—looked at Susan Pickett. An unexpected thing had happened. It was as if a chair had spoken.

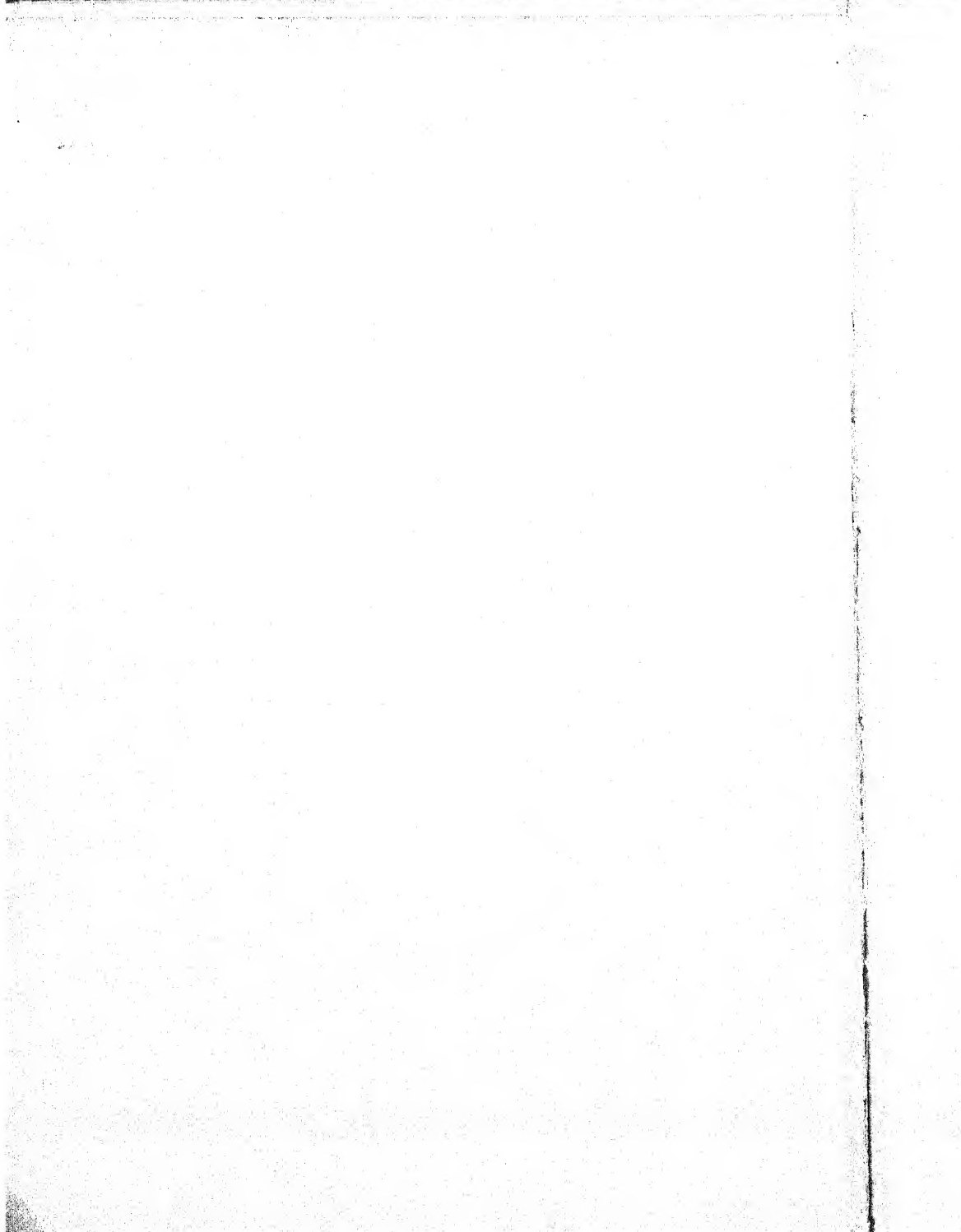
"I think I'll be able to find him," Susan Pickett said.

The Secretary said, "Thanks, Mrs. Pickett." His eyes were hurting again. He frowned and took off his glasses and laid them across his file. Sometimes he wondered whether he knew everything that went on inside The Department of State.



Received from
READER'S SERVICE
Field Dept. of Foreign Missions





Received from

READER'S SERVICE

Presb. Board of Foreign Missions



Beyond Desire

PIERRE LA MURE



The Boy in the Model-T

STEPHEN LONGSTREET



The Horse Soldiers

HAROLD SINCLAIR



What a Year!

JOE ALEX MORRIS

BOOKS ABRIDGED, INC. *New York*

BEYOND DESIRE

A NOVEL BASED ON THE LIFE OF

*Felix and
Cécile Mendelssohn*

BY

PIERRE LA MURE



AN ABRIDGEMENT

The Author

PIERRE LA MURE was a successful French writer in 1938; his weekly articles from America had appeared for many years in a Paris newspaper and his two biographies, *Edison* and *Rockefeller*, had earned him the Strassburger Prize for literature. The following year France was at war and Mr. La Mure's career as a French writer came to an end. It was then that he resolved to learn how to write in English. The publication of *Moulin Rouge* in 1950—his first book in English—was an immediate success. Mr. La Mure lives in Beverly Hills, California, and is at work on a new novel.

BEYOND DESIRE—Pierre La Mure
Published by Random House, Inc.
© Copyright, 1955, by Pierre La Mure

BOOK ONE

I

Early one September morning a blue cabriolet was racing through the narrow streets of lower Berlin toward the Hamburg stagecoach depot. In it two young men in beaver hats sat side by side. One was Felix Mendelssohn, the banker's son; the other, his best friend, Karl Klingemann.

"And all because of a woman!" Karl muttered dejectedly. "To think that because of a red-headed strumpet by the name of Anna Skrumpnagel I am now fleeing Berlin in shame, in debt and in a hurry!"

"Courage," said Felix. "You'll see, you will love England. As a secretary of the Hanover Legation every door will open to you. You will be dined and wined to death. I wish I were going with you. I was there last year—unfortunately with my father—and I met the most attractive young lady—"

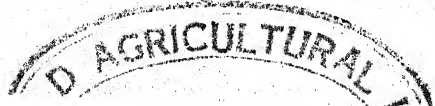
"Of course she threw herself at you, they all do!" Karl flung in a flush of enviousness. "You are the luckiest man alive. You have everything—looks, talent, money, two sisters who worship you, a fiancée who is both beautiful and rich."

"Nina isn't my fiancée."

"Everyone knows you two will get married one of these days. And to crown it all you have genius—a perfectly useless thing to a millionaire. At twenty-six you are a great composer." A look of admiring despondency came into Karl's eyes. "The gods have been too kind to you. Somehow you will have to pay for it. Perhaps you, too, will meet your Anna Skrumpnagel. Then you will know the torment of unrequited love."

As the cabriolet raced toward the depot, Karl pleaded with his friend to profit from his own unhappy experience and renounce women.

With passion he denounced the woman who was the cause of



PIERRE LA MURE

his exile. "Lying, predatory, expensive—that's what she is. She is a wallet-vampire, a heartless wench, but"—he stopped abruptly as memories flocked to his mind—"but I can't live without her." He gripped both of Felix's wrists. "Do you hear? Somehow I must get her to come and join me in London and you"—the grip tightened around Felix's wrists—"you must bring her to me!"

"I!" exclaimed Felix, startled by the unexpected turn of the conversation.

"There is no time to go into this," blurted Karl, now thoroughly aroused. "You said a moment ago you wanted to come. I shall move heaven and earth and find some excuse for you to come to London in the spring, but only on the condition that you bring Anna with you."

"But, Karl, you just said—"

"Never mind what I said," shouted his friend. "I must have Anna or I shall do away with myself and you'll never get back the money you generously lent me. Go to see her tonight after the show. Tell her I've forgiven her, assure her of my undying love, take her to supper and keep my memory alive in her calous heart."

He was still giving last-minute instructions to Felix when the cabriolet entered the courtyard of the Hamburg mailcoach depot. As the coach rumbled away Karl leaned out of the window. "Remember," he cried, waving a mournful handkerchief, "the Friedrich Wilhelmstadt Theatre! Go to see her tonight—"

Late the next morning Gustav, Felix's valet, entered his young master's room and, as he expected, found him sound asleep. Knowing from experience that nothing would awake him—in the old days he had to splash cold water on his face to get him to open his eyes—he began humming loudly to himself as he went about the room.

He was sorting Felix's clothes when the door opened and Fanny Mendelssohn came in.

"Still asleep?" she asked without waiting for the reply.

BEYOND DESIRE

The old servant nodded his shiny pate and went on with his work. Without hesitation the young lady walked to her brother, kissed him on the cheek; then, gripping his shoulders, proceeded to shake him with all her strength.

"Get up, get up," she commanded. "Come on, open your eyes. It's almost noon, and I've something to tell you. Something important."

"What is it?" The words came from another, infinitely remote world.

"I've received a letter from Wilhelm." This remark was accompanied by another bone-shaking jostle. "Johann brought it to me when he came back from the bank."

Felix let out a long-suffering moan and struggled to a sitting position. "What does he say? Does he still want to marry you?"

"Of course he does. He'll be back in the spring."

"I think he is after your dowry," Felix said with a grin.

This was a standing joke between them. For three years their father had opposed Fanny's attachment to Wilhelm Hensel, a poor art student, cutting short all discussions with an emphatic, "He is after my daughter's dowry." Only recently had he become reconciled to the dismal prospect of an artist as a son-in-law, and a tentative betrothal date had been set for the following spring.

"I suppose you're dying to read me the letter you've just received," smiled Felix. "Do you mind if I have my breakfast while I listen? One understands and sympathizes so much better on a full stomach."

Fanny read her fiancé's letter with the blushing emotion of a young woman in love. Felix watched her with tenderness and envy. This was love—pure, steadfast, complete. How wonderful it must be to be in love . . .

This morning, as usual, Felix proceeded to his study. For two hours he worked with total and serene concentration, correcting the proofs of the four-hand arrangement which his English publisher Cramer had sent him.

The work done, he went to pay his respects to his mother.

PIERRE LA MURE

"I am glad to see you, Felix," Leah Mendelssohn said with a smile, giving him her hand to kiss, and resting her knitting on her lap. "Sit down and tell me what kept you out until six o'clock this morning." She smiled at his look of surprise. "I don't want to know her name or what she does. Merely whether it is anything serious or not."

Felix knew his mother too well to attempt hiding the truth from her. She detested lies, called them childish subterfuges and a waste of time. "No, Mother, it isn't anything serious," he said. "As a matter of fact it is a rather ridiculous affair. It came out of my promise to help Karl, but have no fear, I have lost neither my head nor my heart."

For a while they chatted of various things. She knew him better than anyone, and better than anyone she understood the contrasts of his nature, the never-ending conflict between a prodigious and serene intellectuality and his restless emotionalism and morbid sensitiveness.

Of his talent—she distrusted the word genius—she was absolutely certain. Methodically she had buttressed her opinion with that of outstanding and outspoken musicians. Zelter, his gruff and exacting teacher, had told her, "Madame, I have nothing more to teach him, he could teach me a lot. His musical gifts are simply phenomenal." Cherubini, director of the Paris Conservatoire, had been left speechless by his improvisations and his fugues. What could one say of a boy who at sixteen had written the *Midsummer Overture*, the *Symphony in C* at fifteen, and a quartet before he was twelve? She had watched him conduct professional orchestras with the authority of a seasoned conductor. A thousand times she had observed this phenomenal, almost frightening faculty of total concentration which had brought him success without apparent effort in any field he had chosen to engage. Casually, as if playing, he had learned six languages, passed his law examinations at the Berlin University with brilliance. The great Hegel himself had confided to her that he could easily have become an eminent jurist. With all that, he had found time to read and digest the masterpieces of

BEYOND DESIRE

ancient and modern literature. He rode, swam, danced and skated beautifully. He beat his father at chess and was regarded as a champion billiards player.

Then where was the flaw? Where was the discord in this monotonous litany of perfections? She alone knew the answer, and as she gazed on his high-strung, handsome—almost too handsome—face, she felt a spasm of anguish and a secret premonition of the future.

"Are you riding to town?" she asked.

He nodded and got to his feet. "I want to show Herr Zelter the corrected proofs before mailing them back to England. And then"—he hunched his shoulders and made a wry face—"I'm afraid I must stop at the bank and get some money."

Both knew what it meant and they exchanged a conspiratorial glance.

"Perhaps you'll be lucky," she said. "Perhaps your father will be in conference and unable to see you."

Again he bent down over her hand. "Let's hope so."

But Abraham Mendelssohn was not in conference and he was most anxious to see his son. When the head cashier informed him that "Herr Felix" was at his desk with a request for two hundred thalers, the banker let out a grunt and said, "Send him in."

Felix received the message with fortitude. Squaring his shoulders, he entered his father's office, bowed courteously and stood waiting for the sermon that was to come.

"I was deprived of the pleasure of your company at breakfast," the banker began in his most mellifluous tone. "But your numerous bills which come to the bank for payment as well as your frequent cash withdrawals assure me you are attending to your material comfort." Then came the roar and the ritual slam on the desk. "When the devil are you going to start working and earn some money? Yes, money. This low contemptible thing you spend so easily. Do you know how hard it is to earn money? How much things cost?"

PIERRE LA MURE

Then Abraham Mendelssohn launched into the history of the Mendelssohn family. Being of a logical turn of mind, he began at the beginning with the inspiring saga of the poor school-teacher of Dessau, on the Elbe. With much pathos, the multi-millionaire financier described his grandfather's hardships, privations and tribulations. This, Felix had computed, usually occupied five minutes; today it took more than ten. At last his father was ready to tackle the inspiring biography of Moses Mendelssohn, his father. This was the *pièce de resistance* of the lecture. Moses Mendelssohn was the family's great man.

"My father had an iron will," Abraham Mendelssohn said, pressing a pinch of snuff to his nostrils. "Also exceptional intelligence and great resourcefulness."

Felix nodded in full agreement. Obviously, the grandfather must have had all three. He had translated the Hebrew Bible into German—an Herculean task in itself—written several profound essays and a sensational best-seller called *Phaedon*. Celebrated as a thinker and a wit, he was sought by the most illustrious men of his time. He launched into a one-man crusade to improve the relations between Jews and Gentiles and did his best to tear down the wall of mutual prejudice and suspicion they had built between them. He reminded them all that they were God's children, equal under God's sun. When he died at fifty-seven, there was not a Jew in Germany who did not know about Moses Mendelssohn.

"My father left us a great name," commented the banker piously, "and therefore a great responsibility."

The only thing Moses had not left was money. Too busy to improve the world, he neglected to improve his finances. "I decided to change all that," said Felix's father with great simplicity. But—he raised a warning finger—"don't think I am a rich man. Nothing could be further from the truth. Compared to my friends, the Rothschilds, I am practically a beggar. This is why it is imperative that you should find some way to earn money."

Felix let out an inward sigh. The lecture was over. There

BEYOND DESIRE

remained only the familiar exchange of views on the unsolvable question of money.

"You know I'd like nothing better than to earn my expenses," protested Felix, "but there is very little money in music."

"That is why you should look upon it as a pastime and not as a career. Any profession that doesn't feed its man isn't worth the name."

"I'm watching for any opportunity. Perhaps some orchestra conductor in Munich or Cologne or Düsseldorf may be kind enough to resign or die, so that I may take his place."

"This is a long-term approach to the problem," declared the banker with an impatient gesture. "You may be an old man yourself before such a post becomes vacant. Of course, you could work here as a lawyer. I always can use one more lawyer."

Felix let out a gasp. "You wouldn't want that, Father! I'd make a terrible lawyer."

"Not worse than the average," said the banker drily. "You are not stupid."

There was a discreet knock on the door. The banker's secretary announced that Count von Steinmiltz of the Royal Treasury was outside. Abraham Mendelssohn nodded and rose from his leather chair. "On your way out stop at the cashier's," he said. "He'll give you what you need."

"Thank you, Father."

Summer, that year, lingered through September. Then the first autumn rains came and the weather turned cold. Felix wrote a considerable amount of music, did much skating and dancing, met his friends at fashionable cafés. He followed Hegel's post-graduate lectures at the university, attended the opera and the Singakademie concerts, sent flowers, bought a number of useless and expensive things and earned no money at all.

Thus winter passed. The snow thawed on the roofs and the streets became quagmires of mud. Wilhelm Hensel, Fanny's pa-

PIERRE LA MURE

tient suitor, returned from Rome, and grudgingly Abraham Mendelssohn set the betrothal date for the end of the month. An atmosphere of excitement descended upon the house. There was to be a formal dinner followed by a short concert and a ball. Much had to be planned and organized. Felix plunged into the preparation of the festivities. He wrote special music for the occasion, rehearsed the orchestra.

At last the great day arrived. Early that afternoon he drove to town for some last-minute arrangements. His favorite flower shop was in a dilapidated yellow brick building which at one time had known a short-lived popularity as a theatre and concert hall. Since then fashion had moved to another section of town and the antiquated hall with its tarnished decorations and worn plush seats had fallen on evil days.

That afternoon Felix's attention was attracted by the sound of a piano seeping through the back wall of the shop. He stopped in the middle of a sentence and listened. The music was unfamiliar to him, wild and caressing, unlike any he had ever heard. But there was no mystery about the manner in which it was being played; here was piano-playing at its superlative best.

"Do you know who is playing?" he asked the woman in charge.

"A young pianist, a Frenchman I think. Anyway, he has a French name. He plays well, doesn't he?" Then she added, pointing to a recess in the wall, "If you want you can get into the hall through that door."

When Felix slipped into the hall, the spectacle that presented itself was heart-rending. Less than twenty people sparsely dotted the first two rows. On the stage a blond tragic-faced young man was playing the thunderous opening chords of the Revolutionary Etude.

Felix had watched many thrilling pianistic feats, but never had seen or heard anything like this. When the piece came to its abrupt shattering end, Felix sprang to his feet, frenziedly clapping his hands. At the keyboard Frederic Chopin seemed

BEYOND DESIRE

to awake from his trance. He wheeled around on his stool, surprised by this one-man ovation, and gave to Felix a slow exhausted smile of gratitude. Then he rose, gave a ceremonious bow to his pitiful audience and walked off the stage.

A few minutes later Felix wound his way backstage to the pianist's dressing room. He knocked and the young man himself opened the door.

He recognized his hand-clapping admirer and smiled. "Oh, *c'est vous!*" he said. "*Entrez, je vous prie.*"

Felix entered the shabby dressing room and introduced himself.

"Not the Mendelssohn of the *Midsummer Overture*?" he gasped, grasping Felix's sleeve. Felix nodded, smiling, and the pianist let out a cry of incredulous admiration. "*Bohze Moy!*" he exclaimed, lapsing into Polish in his excitement. "I can't believe it! Do you know that you've written a masterpiece? By the way, my name is Chopin, Frederic Chopin. But don't be misled by my name. I am not French, I am Polish. As Polish as can be."

"What!" It was Felix's turn to gasp and stare. "Then you must be the composer of the *Là ci darem* Variations?"

With the impulsiveness of youth they stared at each other. Then all of a sudden they began to talk at random, often at the same time. They had a thousand things to ask each other. They felt like old friends.

As Felix was complimenting him on his superlative performance of a moment ago, Frederic Chopin let out a grunt of abysmal dismay. "One more superlative performance like this one and I'll have to walk to Paris. I'd hoped this concert would bring me some money, instead it has ruined me. I'll be lucky if I can pay my coach fare."

"When are you leaving?"

"Tomorrow."

Felix frowned with disappointment, then his face brightened. "Look, Frederic, my sister's getting engaged today and I must hurry back home. Why don't you come with me? You'll

PIERRE LA MURE

meet a lot of nice people and we'll have a chance to talk. Then after the ball, when everybody's gone, we'll have some music, just the two of us."

And now it was over—the dinner, the concert, the ball. It was late, very late. The huge ballroom was silent and dark, except for the amber glow from two silver candlesticks standing on the piano. Felix sat on the piano bench, one hand still resting on the keyboard. A few feet away Frederic Chopin, his legs crossed, was sprawled deep into a green plush armchair. Neither of them spoke. They had talked too much, drunk too much champagne, laughed and danced and played piano too much. Now they were tired, drowsy, a little sad, content to enjoy the silence of the night in each other's company.

All of a sudden Chopin spoke. "Your sister Fanny is the happiest girl in the world tonight. She loves and is loved. What more can anyone want?"

Felix smiled. "Odd that you should say that. I was thinking the same thing."

Again silence fell between them. Somewhere a clock chimed.

"Strange, isn't it," Felix remarked, "that milestones, even the happiest, make us feel the passing of time and think of the future. And when you think of the future you always end up by thinking about death." He straightened up on the bench and prepared to rise. "I'm getting morose. We'd better go to sleep."

"Just a few more minutes," pleaded Chopin. "God knows when we'll see each other again. Play one more of your compositions and we'll go."

"All right, but I'm going to play something that neither you nor I could have written." While talking he turned to the music cabinet at his side and pulled out a thin folio bound in rare leather. "It's a fragment of some oratorio or cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach."

"Dear old Bach!" Chopin smiled. "My teacher used to make me play his *Well-tempered Clavichord* until I thought I'd go crazy."

BEYOND DESIRE

"So did mine. I suppose everybody who plays the piano has had to struggle with those exercises. But this is something quite different. It is to the *Well-tempered Clavichord* what a Rembrandt is to a geometrical design. Personally I think it is the most magnificent music ever written."

"Why isn't it published?"

"Because, as I told you, it is only a fragment, the last four pages of a much larger composition. Where the rest is, nobody knows. Herr Zelter, my teacher, found those pages in an old music store amidst a lot of rubbish. How it got there nobody knows. Now shut your eyes and listen. Try to imagine a chorus, an organ and a full orchestra."

When he finished playing he turned to his friend. "Well?"

Chopin did not reply at once, staring unseeingly ahead, as if in a trance. "It is shattering," he said at last. "Even Handel's *Messiah* doesn't have that sweeping grandeur."

The following day Chopin left for Paris. At 3, Leipzigerstrasse, life resumed its smooth, luxurious course. Outwardly, everything was as it had always been, but soon Felix became aware of a change in the atmosphere of the house. Fanny's engagement had marked the end of an era. The Mendelssohn family, one and indivisible, was about to crumble and scatter. Already Fanny was engaged, soon she would go away. Fanny gone, the house would not be the same. The sound of her lovely singing voice, her garden bonnet hanging in the hall, her brushes and water-color paints—all these things were part of the atmosphere, the soul of the house. Soon there would be other engagements, other marriages, other separations.

In due time Felix received a letter from Karl. With relief he read that his friend had lost all interest in Anna since meeting Suzy Plunkett, a young English woman of intriguing personality. "I'm looking forward to telling you more about Suzy, for Sir George Smart, director of the Philharmonic Orchestra, is sending you an invitation to come here and give a concert of your compositions."

PIERRE LA MURE

To Felix's astonishment his father read Sir George's letter without explosions of disapproval and prophecies of disaster. "Most flattering indeed," he said, resting the letter on the desk. "Sir George says that all London is waiting for you." There was a gleam of pride in the old man's eyes which he hastened to conceal from his son by turning his gaze to the window. "Perhaps," he went on "this trip could even have some practical usefulness. I'm negotiating a loan for the Royal Prussian Treasury and trying to associate the various branches of the Rothschild Bank in this affair. I am already in full agreement with Nathan Rothschild, the head of the London branch. But James Rothschild, who directs the Paris branch, is somewhat hesitant. Now his wife, Betty, who incidentally is a delightful lady happens also to be very much interested in the arts, especially music. She has a great deal of influence over her husband and it just came to my mind that on your way back from London you could stop in Paris for a few days and strike up a friendship with her."

"I think I understand what you have in mind, Father," said Felix. "I shall do my best."

When, a week later, the paddle-ship churned her way out of the Hamburg harbor, Felix stood on the deck watching the wharf recede in the distance. It was good to be young, rich, famous, and to be going to England . . . Softly he repeated to himself a sentence from Sir George's letter. "All London is waiting for you . . ."

In a flourish of trumpet blare, cracking whip and galloping hooves, the Dover stagecoach burst into the cobbled courtyard of a Charing Cross inn. Amidst the joyous confusion of arrival, Felix spied his friend Karl Klingemann, resplendent in a lilac frock coat and flowery cravat. With surprising efficiency the diplomat attended to the transfer of his friend's luggage.

"Of course you're staying with me," said Karl. "I won't hear of your going to a hotel."

As the cab wound its way toward Bury Street, the portly young man extolled the charms and privileges of a diplomatic career. The work was interesting and light. So light, especially at the Hanover Legation, that everyone there had time for leisurely lunches followed by long restful siestas. Then there was the social life. Hostesses adored diplomats. Any diplomat—even a third secretary at the Hanover Legation.

During the next two weeks Felix was too busy with the preparations for his concert to accept the invitations that poured upon him. Everyone, it seemed, wanted to meet the young millionaire composer. The season was in full bloom and London was at its dazzling best. The greatest singers in the world—Sontag, Pisoni, Donzelli and the fabulous golden-voiced Maria Salla, who had just made a triumphant debut—were all in London at the moment. Yet Felix would refuse to go out and hear them and his friend would grow indignant. "At least come to hear Maria Salla," he would plead. "I tell you she is fantastic." He would wag a prophetic finger under Felix's nose. "Some day, when your grandchildren learn that you had the opportunity to hear Maria Salla and you stayed home with your nose in your scores, they will say 'Our grandfather was an idiot.'" Felix would accept the rebuff with patient good humor and return to his work.

There was no time to lose. The date of the concert had been

PIERRE LA MURE

set for May 25th, the program had been selected. Beside the inevitable *Midsummer* Overture, he was to conduct his Symphony in C and a scherzo from his Octet especially orchestrated for this occasion. Everywhere he had met with friendliness and co-operation. Thomas Attwood, treasurer of the Philharmonic Society, was kindness itself. Sir George Smart, conductor of the Philharmonic Orchestra, gave his wholehearted support to his young rival. He, in turn, was anxious to do his best. In Berlin his family was waiting with bated breath for the outcome of "this British adventure," as his father called it.

But mostly it was the formidable body of veteran musicians that composed the Philharmonic Orchestra that he wanted to conquer. With them, wealth, prestige of birth, social graces did not count. Only competence, authentic mastery would do the trick. When, after the final rehearsal, they rose in a spontaneous gesture of tribute, he was so startled by this unexpected demonstration that then and there he wept, furious at himself for this un-British display of emotion. But they understood, and a veteran tuba player expressed their feelings in twangy cockney. "It's awright, young'un. Cry all you want. You're a blinkin' fine musician, and you'll see, tomorrow we'll play them off their seats."

The prediction proved true. At the end of the concert the audience rose in ovation. Afterward, in his dressing room, Felix knew the intoxicating impact of public acclaim at close quarters. He tried to discount the fantastic praises, dismiss the superlatives, the absurd flatteries. He did his best to keep himself in hand. He bowed, thanked, muttered deprecating protests. But just the same it was thrilling to hear oneself called a genius; to acknowledge the bows of eminent critics, the congratulations of celebrated artists.

"Well," asked Karl that evening when they were back in Bury Street, "how does it feel to have London at your feet?"

"Thrilling, but if I stay in this town another month I shall become a pompous, vainglorious, insufferable ass."

"Now will you come and hear Maria Salla? She's singing tomorrow in the *Barbiere*."

BEYOND DESIRE

Felix covered a yawn with his hand. "She may be all you say, but still I won't go. I'm tired. I don't want to hear any more music, not even my own."

The next evening, with his friend Karl, Felix attended a reception at the Devonshire House and danced far into the night. Even the crushing formality of the occasion and the awesome splendor of the surroundings could not repress his high spirits. The job was done, the concert over, he wanted to have fun. And fun he had. He talked and laughed and flirted. Champagne blurred the faces, swayed the floor under his feet and swept away the last vestiges of his reserve.

It was the same at the Landsdowne House the following night. With gaping mouths and raised eyebrows, dowagers watched the conductor of the Philharmonic Orchestra caper like a youngster and spin their daughters around the ballroom.

As they were walking home, Karl vented his disapproval. "How do you expect to impress people if you act like a school-boy?" The sound of his voice broke the stillness of the moonlit night. "What would your grandfather Moses say?"

"My grandfather was a philosopher. He'd say there's a time to be serious and a time to be foolish. This is the time to be foolish!"

When they entered their apartment, they found a letter placed in evidence between two lighted candles. It came from Berlin and had been brought by special messenger. With a frown, Felix opened it and began to read. His face, a moment ago flushed with laughter and champagne, turned grave.

"What is it?" asked Karl.

"My Uncle Nathan, who lives in Silesia, has written my father about the terrible floods they've been having there. Hundreds of families are homeless. Now my father wants to know if I could give a benefit concert for those poor people."

The following afternoon he sat in Sir George Smart's office. Nothing remained of the capering youngster of the night before. His brown eyes rested anxiously on the elderly man who was reading Abraham Mendelssohn's letter.

PIERRE LA MURE

"Well, Sir George, what do you think? Will the British public care about the plight of those people?"

Sir George rubbed his chin before replying. "The British can be very generous—especially if they get a little pleasure for their money. You can write your father he can depend on us."

He stopped as the door was flung open and a very beautiful, very agitated young lady shot into his office like a hurricane. Felix caught a glimpse of her eyes. They were light—probably gray or hazel, he couldn't decide—and this surprised him because her hair was jet black. But light they were and at this moment full of thunder and sparks.

She ignored Felix and started talking even before reaching the desk. "Signor Smart," she began, "you are a big *bugiardo*. You tell big lies. Until this day I think you are my friend."

Sir George received this declaration with perfect British *sangfroid*. "Have you met Herr Mendelssohn?" he asked graciously.

The young lady tossed Felix an impatient nod and Sir George had barely time to slip to Felix "This is Miss Salla" before the visitor resumed her discourse.

It took Miss Salla forty-five minutes to state her grievance. She had been engaged by Sir George—who, in addition to his duties as conductor of the Philharmonic, acted occasionally as director of Covent Garden—for a three-month season at the fabulous salary of two thousand guineas. Before giving in he had remonstrated that only Henriette Sontag, the incomparable German soprano, the greatest singer in the world, commanded such a salary, and today Miss Salla had learned that Sontag's salary was two thousand and *five* guineas! This she regarded as a betrayal, an insult both personal and national. It was a machination, an affront to her artistry, her country. She had been cheated of five guineas and the *contratto* it was finished. So saying she veered around and started toward the door. In a flash Sir George was also at the door, grabbing her arm, pulling her back into the room.

"How could you do such a thing to me!" he cried in a heart-rending tone. "And how can you be so greedy, so mercenary

BEYOND DESIRE

and heartless over a paltry five guineas when in Silesia people are homeless, cold and hungry!"

"What Silesia? What people?" she wanted to know.

"Tell her!" said Sir George, turning to Felix.

Felix did. From imagination he described the murderous Silesian inundations, the sinking farms, the bellowing cattle, the mothers clutching their children. "We were just arranging the details for a benefit concert when you came in," he concluded.

A startling change had come over the singer. Her clear and slightly slanted eyes reflected her concern. "And the *bambini*?" she asked with dismay. What was going to happen to the poor little *bambini*? Abruptly she turned to Sir George. At once, this very minute, he must take one hundred guineas from her salary and send it to the poor hungry children. Also the five guineas she was entitled to and had been cheated out of . . .

"And you will sing tomorrow?" asked the baronet with an inward sigh of relief.

Of course, she would sing. And from the heart and not like La Sontag, who sang from the belly . . . Felix expressed his gratitude, thanked her in the name of Silesian children. This touched her very much. In the office the atmosphere was becoming dense with emotion. Sir George cleared his throat and declared that Miss Salla's heart was as large as the range of her voice which was extraordinary. Slowly the scene was drawing to a close in an exchange of mutual respect and protests of eternal devotion.

Miss Salla turned to Felix. "Maybe you drive me to the house, *si*?" Her eyes stayed upon him as he spoke. They no longer were full of sparks. They could, he observed, be strangely tender.

Downstairs her carriage was waiting. They drove through the bustle of Oxford Street, chatting easily, enjoying the afternoon sunshine. She lived, she told him, at the corner of Half Moon Street and Bolton Row, in Mayfair. He remarked this was but a short distance from Bury Street. Why, they were neighbors. Well, almost . . . Then maybe he comes to see her, *si*?

PIERRE LA MURE

. . . And maybe, some evening she cooks the *past' asciutta* or the *lasagne* for him, *si?* . . . She inquired how long he had been in London, and he said about a month.

"Then perhaps you came to Covent Garden to hear me, *si?*?" she asked, her lips parted in a smile of anticipation. "Perhaps you hear me sing *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* or *Lucia*? . . ."

With some embarrassment he admitted he had not yet had the pleasure of hearing her beautiful voice. He saw her smile fade. Disappointment fell like a shadow over her face. Hastily he explained he had been too busy with the preparations for his concert.

"But I see in the newspaper you go to Devonshire House and Landsdowne House," she retorted. "To go to those places you are not too busy, no? To dance with stupid rich girls you are not too busy, no? But to come to hear me you have no time. Maybe you think opera is good only for stupid people," she persisted. "Not like the big symphonies."

"On the contrary, Miss Salla, I love opera."

"Then maybe you don't like me, you think I am *brutta*, ugly."

He burst out with laughter. "Ugly! Why I think you are the most enchanting—"

"Maybe you think I'm stupid because I make many mistakes when I speak?"

"I assure you nothing could be further from the truth."

"Then why don't you come to hear me sing?"

Her persistence exasperated him. "Dammit," he exploded, "I told you I couldn't. You didn't come to my concert either. So we're quits."

She gave him a look of hurt reproachfulness. "I come to your concert," she said. "I hear you play the Overture and the big symphony."

He was staring at her, swelling with delight. She had come to his concert, seen him conduct the Philharmonic . . . "Why—why didn't you come to my dressing room?"

She let out a contemptuous snort, as the carriage pulled in before a two-storied brick building. "Like all the stupid girls

BEYOND DESIRE

who make eyes like sheep at you and open their mouths like sardines out of water?"

He helped her out of the carriage. With a wave she dismissed the driver. The trotting hoofbeats receded and faded away.

Still talking she started up the few steps to the door. "And you give big smiles to everybody, kiss all the women's hands and make many salutations. That's why I don't come to your dressing room." They reached the landing. "If a man wants me he must want only me."

Suddenly her mouth was upon his—full, soft and loving. Her fingertips dug deep into the back of his neck. He felt her jaw slacken and the tip of her tongue slide over his lips. Her body arched into his own and for an instant their hearts mingled their beats.

Then, as suddenly as it had come, it was over. The door opened, and she was out of sight.

That evening he told Karl about his encounter. "And then she kissed me," he said. "It was a case of love at first sight, if I ever saw one."

The diplomat let out a moan of dismay. "Lust, you mean. Run, Felix!" he said with pleading urgency. "Forget the concert and the Silesian flood. Believe me, go away and don't look back. Don't you see that kiss was a hook, and now you've swallowed it all—bait, hook and sinker. She has you at the end of her line."

Well, he finally was listening to her, and no mistake, she did have a phenomenal voice . . . It was thrilling to hear that voice soar like a jet of crystal-like sound until it filled every crack and cranny of Covent Garden. More thrilling still to watch her prancing about that enormous stage in her Spanish costume, swaying her hips, tossing her black curls, fanning the lust of every man in the audience. But most thrilling of all to know that she loved you . . . For she did love him, and no mistake about that either. Poor silly Karl with his "Run, Felix!"

PIERRE LA MURE

That kiss yesterday had the ring of true passion about it. She was his. Well, almost . . .

He saw much of Maria during the following days. Used to women's advances and eager surrenders he had come to look upon the Game of Love as an amiable but monotonous diversion. Maria proceeded to correct this misconception. She initiated him into the exquisite torments of love. With unerring skill she inflamed his desire to make the denial of herself more cruel.

The results of this strategy were prompt and devastating. From being loved he became for the first time in his life amorous. He lost his gift of restful slumber. His judgment grew foggy, his will power dwindled to naught. The hairshirt of unrequited desire kept him in a permanent state of restlessness. He was both happier and more miserable than ever in his life. Hating Maria he could not bear the thought of giving her up. He found his new condition exciting as well as exhausting.

He found it also extremely expensive. Apparently Maria had made up her mind to wipe out the sizable balance of his letter of credit deposited at the Rothschild bank. Felix was forced to write to his father, explaining the exigencies of London's social life.

"How's your money holding out?" asked Karl several days later. He read the answer to his question in Felix's dejected look. "No letter from your father yet?"

"No. Perhaps he's written directly to the bank. Maria loves me, I think—but she's struggling with herself."

It was true. Many times she had seemed on the verge of surrender. Then by a supreme effort she caught herself and sent him home, dazed and aching with unsatisfied desire.

"Some women have been known to struggle with themselves for years," said Karl with wry sympathy. "For your sake I hope passion gets the upper hand—soon."

Yes, soon, Felix echoed in his mind. Time was growing short. The benefit concert was scheduled for the following week. With a spasm of regret he recalled the June days that could have been filled with love and had been wasted.

BEYOND DESIRE

Felix saw little of Maria during the following days. She was rehearsing a new opera, and his time was taken up with rehearsals. It was good to be once again among musicians, to forget Maria for a moment. Music did not hurt. It cleansed and comforted.

He stopped at the bank in the forlorn hope his father might have sent another letter of credit. Perhaps he might be able to negotiate a loan. After all, Herr Rothschild was a friend of the family, he had been enthusiastic after the first concert. And he seemed such an understanding man.

At once he was introduced into the banker's office.

"I've just received a letter from your father," began Nathan Rothschild, a teasing glint in his eyes. "Would you like me to read what he says?"

Something in the banker's tone warned Felix. His heart sank. "You needn't, Herr Rothschild. I can guess. My father tells you that I am an incorrigible spendthrift, that he gave me ample funds and asks you not to advance me a single penny."

"You have remarkable insight into your father's mind," said the banker. "I should have been delighted to advance you money, but—"

"I understand and I thank you just the same," said Felix, getting up. "Parents sometimes forget they too were young once . . . It's all right. I'll manage somehow."

"One always does at your age," said the banker with a wistful smile.

On the eve of the concert Maria asked Felix to take her to supper after her performance at Covent Garden. When Felix came home that evening he noticed a strip of light under Karl's door. Noiselessly he peered in and was met by a melancholy sight. In his nightshirt and tasseled nightcap the third secretary of the Hanover Legation was sitting up in bed, mournfully staring at the coverlet.

"Why aren't you asleep?" asked Felix, sitting on the edge of the bed.

Karl let out a lugubrious sigh. "You're looking at a man in

PIERRE LA MURE

the throes of financial debacle," he announced with solemnity. "This morning my banker informed me that my account was overdrawn above and beyond all reasonable limits. But let's not discuss my sorrows. How's the elusive prima donna?"

"She was very sweet tonight," said Felix quietly. "I've never seen her look so beautiful. She wants me to spend my last evening in London with her tomorrow. She's going to cook an Italian dinner for me."

"How touching!" cried his friend with emotion. "Women are wonderful! You ruin yourselves for them, then they cook a plate of spaghetti for you and call it even!"

It was toward the end of the concert, as he was conducting the last movement of his symphony, that Felix decided that Karl was right. One shouldn't take women seriously. All this pain, this bewilderment, this agony of jealousy—all this was ridiculous. Maria was a minx, incapable of love. She had toyed with him and cost him a lot of money. The thing to do about it was forget it all and never, never again believe another woman. Tonight, after dinner he would take her in his arms and tell her adieu.

The clatter of applause brought him back to the reality of the concert, the Argyll Rooms, the distinguished and enthusiastic audience. During the short reception that followed he forgot the haunting thoughts of Maria. He smiled and bowed, he expressed his thanks and kissed ladies' hands, declined numberless invitations and promised to return to London the following year.

In the coolness of the late afternoon he drove home with his friend Karl. "More than three hundred guineas will be sent to the Silesians," he exclaimed as they were nearing Bury Street.

Felix had started packing when there was a knock at the door, and Karl's manservant ushered in a tall side-whiskered gentleman of impressive mien.

"Herr Felix Mendelssohn?" he asked with awesome formality.

BEYOND DESIRE

"Yes?" said Felix who somehow mistook him for a creditor.

The gentleman frowned. With the same Olympian unctuousness he gave his name, declared his titles and informed Felix that Her Gracious Majesty wished to see him.

"Now?" gasped Felix, aghast. In two hours he was due at Maria's.

"Now," nodded the court messenger with inexorable finality.

At the Palace, Felix was led to a small, almost intimate room where the young Queen sat bent over her needlepoint, chatting spiritedly with her ladies-in-waiting.

As the door opened, she raised her cornflower eyes and looked smilingly at Felix. Her smile enchanted him, it had a unique quality of shyness and regal dignity. She held out her hand and apologized for "abducting" him. His presence, she explained, afforded her ladies and herself an extreme pleasure, but it would be a delightful surprise to His Royal Highness, who was an ardent music lover and a great admirer of his. His Royal Highness was not at the Palace at the moment, but would soon return. She then introduced him to the various ladies of her entourage. As he bowed his way among them he sent a silent prayer that His Royal Highness would soon come home.

"And now, Herr Mendelssohn," said the Queen, "won't you please play for us?"

He did. Each short piece was greeted by the most flattering comments. Requests became more pressing and numerous as time went by. With a smile he obliged, glancing with growing uneasiness at the ornate clock on the chimney mantel.

At long last Prince Albert came in. With him was a tall gentleman of great distinction and several years his elder. At their entrance the ladies-in-waiting rose and performed expert curtsies. With consummate grace the Prince kissed the Queen's hand, bowed to the ladies and expressed his delighted surprise at finding Herr Mendelssohn. Felix was then presented to the other gentleman who had been watching him with smiling interest and turned out to be His Majesty Friedrich Augustus the Second, King of Saxony.

PIERRE LA' MURE

"Perhaps you will come to Saxony some day?" said the King with a gracious smile. "Have you heard of the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig?"

"Of course, Your Majesty."

But already Prince Albert was breaking in. "Herr Mendelssohn will perhaps conduct the Gewandhaus Orchestra some day," he declared, rubbing his hands, "but now let's have some *goot Musik*."

Everyone seemed to be in the highest spirits. The impromptu musicale was an unexpected diversion from the dull routine of court life. With leaden heart and flying fingers Felix galloped through several of his compositions.

Finally the concert came to an end. Her Majesty inquired if Felix wished to be driven back home.

"Only to Half Moon Street, Your Majesty. I am to meet a friend of mine there." For good measure he added, "An old friend of my family. We went to school together."

The Queen was about to order a carriage when one of her ladies, the Marchioness of Dorsythe remarked that Half Moon Street was on her way home. With the Queen's permission she would be glad to drive Herr Mendelssohn to his old friend's home.

It was one of those summer nights when the sky turned deep purple instead of black. A soft breeze trailed over their faces like an impalpable yet caressing hand. They drove in silence for a while, then the Marchioness took his hand. Why didn't he come for a visit to her Italian villa? she asked in a trembling whisper. "You'd love it there . . ." No doubt he would, he replied. The olive trees, the secluded coves, the cicadas—he would love it all, but important business awaited him in Berlin. He had stayed too long in London . . .

As the carriage entered Half Moon Street, she crept closer to him. "At least give me one kiss," she murmured. Her arms tightened around his neck, her lips clamped to his like hungry leeches. Dimly he heard a clatter of shutters furiously slammed shut and became aware that the carriage was standing still

BEYOND DESIRE

under Maria's window. Swiftly he extricated himself and leaped out.

Cautiously he waited for the clipclop of hoofbeats to fade away before climbing the stairs. He pulled the bell, but no sound came from the house. He rang again. The clapping sound hammered the night a few times, then died. He ran down to the street. Light filtered through the shutters of her room. She was upstairs . . . He called her name. Softly at first, then more loudly.

A sudden blind rage engulfed him. She wasn't going to let him explain, she wasn't going to tell him good-bye. He would leave London without seeing her. His rage swelled into fury.

In a flash he remembered a door under the steps. Already he was there turning the knob. In a gust of rapture he felt the door slide open. He rushed inside, ran through the basement, climbed the stairs three at a time. As he neared her bedroom he heard the muted scuffle of her footsteps rushing toward the door, shoved it open before she could lock it.

She stood there, as if nailed to the floor, glaring at him with a rage equal to his own.

"Maybe you think I am a fool?" She spat the words through clenched teeth. "Maybe you think I don't see you kiss that woman?"

Yesterday he would have stopped, tried to explain. Tonight he did not care what she thought, what she had seen. He gripped her shoulders, pulled her to him. His mouth found hers. Again and again he kissed her. In gasping spurts he told her about playing for the Queen, being delayed against his will. She did not care about that. Only the kiss, that kiss downstairs in the carriage. "You cannot lie this time . . . I see you with my eyes . . ."

Suddenly he felt her body soften, almost deliquesce into his arms. In a sigh of surrender she said, "*Tu sei troppo forte . . .*"

"Speak English," he said, shaking her angrily.

"You are too strong," she said. A smile drifted across her

PIERRE LA MURE

face. Her limbs turned limp, relaxed into acquiescence. "Long time I fight because I have much fear of love . . . But now I fight no more."

Then all was silent in the room. On the small round table the candleflame pulsed and throbbed at the end of the wick.

A week later Felix awoke in a cheerful maple-furnished bedroom of a country inn, somewhere in Surrey. Maria lay at his side sleeping with one side of her face pressed against his bare chest, like a figure in a bas-relief. The rest of her was spread hither and yon. Although they fell asleep, limbs entwined, and clinging to each other, by morning he always discovered her like this. She unfurled in her sleep like those flowers that open at night. This was one of the things he had learned about her since they had fled London and said good-bye to the world of conventions, contracts and common sense.

He also had learned that she awoke swiftly, bright-eyed and full of mischief. Her sensuality was, like her faith, total, naïve and unorthodox. Toward God, the angels and the saints she observed a respectful, distant reserve. But with the Virgin, represented by a small colored plaster statue of the Madonna della Salute, she was on terms of the greatest intimacy. The figurine was her most treasured possession. Often she held it in her hands, speaking to it in pleading whispers or angry reproachful tones, according to the mood of the moment.

Gently he caressed her hair, trailed his fingertips over her bare shoulder with the tranquil assurance of undisputed ownership. She was his, she had told him a hundred times, his to do with whatever he wanted. He was the *padrone*, the master. She belonged to him and her mission was to keep him happy. On the other hand, if she gave him pleasure and kept him in good spirits, then he must be sweet to her, give her many kisses and words of love and let her have her way about most things.

The first thing she wanted was to get out of London. She told him so that first morning in her bedroom on Half Moon Street. "You and me, we go away and never come back, *sì?*" she said, kissing him somewhere around the chin. Dimly he re-

BEYOND DESIRE

membered that she had a contract and that his place was reserved on the coach to Dover. "Besides," he sighed, "I haven't any money. I've spent it all and my father will not send me any."

She shrugged with scorn. "Money!" she snorted. "I have money. Plenty."

He protested that never would he go to the country on her money. It was undignified, it was ungentlemanly. She looked at him with surprise. What was this business about being "ungentlemanly"? *Maledetto!* . . . He was the man she loved, *no*? Well, then that was enough. She cared nothing, less than nothing, whether or not he was a gentleman. But he did; he was a man of honor, and a man of honor didn't go to the country on a woman's money. Then she hit on an idea. "In the country you write an opera, *sì*? I sing in the opera you write. We earn much money, thousands of guineas. Then you give me back the money." At once everything seemed clear and proper. An advance on the opera he was going to write—a perfectly legitimate business transaction. If Rossini could write *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in thirteen days, he, Felix Mendelssohn, could certainly dash off an opera in a few weeks. With Maria in the title role it would be a triumph. Money would pour in, and wouldn't Father be surprised? "But, darling," he said, remembering her contract, "how can we go to the country? You have a contract with Sir George." She shrugged. When she signed the *contratto*, she explained, she hadn't been in love. Now she was in love and therefore the *contratto*, it was broken. That's all there was to it. "The love is like the death, it always comes first." Feebly he spoke about honor, the respect of the given word. Again she looked at him in wonder. Honor? What was this foolish talk about honor? She was in love, she wanted to go to the country with him, *no*? When one was in love, the honor it disappeared. Besides *il signor* Smart, he was such a nice man, he had such a big heart, surely he would understand it was more important for her to be with the man she loved somewhere in the country where the birds sang and the flowers bloomed than at Covent Garden singing some stupid opera

PIERRE LA MURE

. . . While speaking she stippled his face with little puckering kisses. By the time she was through he was convinced.

Karl, of course, felt somewhat differently about the whole thing. But he merely shook his head. "Oh, the madness of it all! . . ." he sighed enviously. "The disarming absurdity of youth, the divine idiocy of love! . . . So you're going to write an opera!" But he understood. He even managed to scrape fifty pounds together. Good, wonderful Karl!

And so they had fled like two criminals and come to this little inn where they had spent a week of heavenly bliss. And now another happy day was waiting for them.

With a smile he looked about the room. His eyes rested on the table near the window. It was stacked with the reams of music paper she had bought for him. Enough paper for several operas. He hadn't as yet written a single note but soon, very soon, perhaps today, he would settle down to work.

Maria stirred and he saw that she was awake. "Good morning, darling."

Then her lips were close to his, her eyes staring into his own—clear, wide, already coaxing. "I love you," she murmured. "You love me, no?"

"Of course I do."

"Then why don't you say? Love is like a plant, it must have water. Today I go and look for the house."

"What house?" he protested weakly. "We don't need a house, we're perfectly happy here."

Yes, but there were other people at the inn, and how could he write the music for the opera in such a place? No, no, he couldn't . . . He thought he could but she knew he couldn't. So she would go and find a little house where they would be all by themselves. There he would write the opera. No, she did not want him to come. She wanted to surprise him.

Late that afternoon she returned, a smile of triumph on her face. She had found the house. It was the cottage of their dreams. It had a thatch roof, a broken fence, a brook. And it was cheap, really cheap.

Felix finally settled on Esther as the subject of his opera and

BEYOND DESIRE

planned to work seriously. Maria plunged into an ecstasy of housecleaning. She scoured and she swept and she scrubbed; she performed with a song on her lips the most menial tasks. When she did not sing, she talked. Her mind, he discovered, had no bottom—anything that came into it fell on her tongue. He learned that the peace of the country did not necessarily mean peace at home.

Abruptly she remembered she was an opera singer. If she was going to sing Felix's opera she must practice. The air became alive with trills and vocalizations. He admired her singing but found it a deterrent to composing. Tactfully he mentioned this to her, and she was hurt and offended.

Slowly, like a full-sailed caravel, summer was sliding by. Already the evening had an autumn languor. Seeing no one, going nowhere, they had little to say to each other. As they became aware that their foolish world of romance was crumbling about them, they sought shelter in the somber fastness of sex. Their love-making assumed a quality of despair, an undertone of farewell. They emerged from their embraces only to find themselves further apart, strangers with nothing in common but their desire.

"I am not good for you," she said softly one morning. "I give you pleasure but not happiness. That is bad."

He was about to protest, say words he no longer believed. She pressed her fingertips to his lips. "You don't talk," she whispered. "If you talk you tell lies."

That day she had a long mumbling conversation in Venetian with the little plaster statue of the Virgin. Later in the afternoon she went out. When she returned she was, he noticed, deathly pale.

It rained that night, a furious October rain that came in splashing sheets against the windows. But the morning after, the sun rose in a cloudless sky.

"Today you go for a walk, *sì?*" she said almost gayly. He protested that he didn't want to go out, but she insisted. "It is not good for you to stay in the house all the time."

Grudgingly he gave in. When he stood in the doorway,

PIERRE LA MURE

about to close the door she ran to him. "I love you always," she said in a panting whisper. She kissed him softly. "Now you go." She almost pushed him out of the house.

When he returned that afternoon he found Karl sitting on his chair, munching an apple. His throat tightened, his palms went damp with sweat.

"Where did she go?" he asked in strangled words.

"I don't know, and I wouldn't tell you if I did," Karl said. Placidly he went on munching, but his eyes were alert, unsmiling.

"I'll find her."

"She won't see you. She told me so." With unexpected gentleness Karl waved to a chair. "Better sit down before you fall down."

Felix stood motionless as if he hadn't heard. "Why—why did she go?" he asked, his voice starting to crack with the approaching sob.

"Because she loves you. She couldn't bear watching the crumbling of her dream. What're you going to do, Felix?" he asked softly. "Go home?"

Felix did not reply. Suddenly he felt very tired. Two tears rolled down his cheeks. "I think I'll go to Paris and see Chopin for a while. Then later I'll go home . . ." Yes, later, in a few months, he would be able to face his father, his family, Nina . . . But not now, not now . . .

For the last few months there had been a new legal counsel at the Mendelssohn Bank. His name, written in flowery cursive on the door of his office, was Felix Mendelssohn. His salary was not large, but since the work he produced in exchange was much smaller, he considered himself adequately paid. He had carefully chosen his office at the end of a long carpetless corridor, at the greatest possible distance from his father's. There Felix spent his days reading poetry, taking long siestas, writing reams of music and, now and then, reminiscing of things past.

Today, for no particular reason, he was thinking about the three months he had spent in Paris before returning home.

BEYOND DESIRE

Memories drifted back as he sat at his desk in his shirtsleeves, nibbling his quill, gazing at the bright summer sky. Little scenes like brief animated vignettes . . . Sounds, colors, faces . . . Some were still clear, others already blurred by the erasing hand of Time. He recalled his arrival on that dismal October afternoon, so well in harmony with his mood of aimlessness and desolation. The creaking sound of the rickety stairs as he climbed the five flights to Chopin's garret-studio, 27, rue Poissonnière. From the second floor he could already hear the pounding and crashing of the keyboard. Frederic was playing one of his polonaises.

At last the top floor, damp and ice-cold, immediately under the roof. Below the bell pull a card: "Frederic Chopin. *Professeur de piano*" . . . A knock. The music stopping in mid bar. The door apprehensively pushed ajar. The sliver of a face, a questioning eye. Then suddenly the joyous cry of recognition. "*Mon cher Felix, quel plaisir!*" . . ." The door flung wide.

Instantly they were old friends again. Indeed better friends than before, for now both were poor. In ten minutes they had exchanged histories. Maria . . . The summer idyll. Her sudden heartbreaking flight . . . "You understand, Frederic, it wasn't just an *amourette*. We loved each other passionately . . . madly . . ." Frederic was patient, tactful. He understood. "You'll see, it will pass in time . . . It was an excellent idea to come here . . . We'll starve together . . ." He pointed to the dilapidated divan. "This will be your bed. I'll do the *cuisine*—that is whenever there is any *cuisine* to be done. You will attend to the housecleaning, appease the landlord when he comes for the rent . . ."

And so it was arranged. Bohemia . . . Real, unadorned Bohemia. Felix tilted his chair against the wall, and gazed smilingly at the tall bookcase with its neat rows of law books. . . . If only Frederic could see him walking through the bank's corridor, some legal sheet in hand. . . . To think that nine months ago he was dining on a chocolate bar and living in a Paris garret . . .

Again Time receded and he was back in rue Poissonnière.

PIERRE LA MURE

It was mid afternoon and he was alone, watching rivulets of rain slide down the window. Gray, like the sky, the rain, life, the future. Everything . . . A knock on the door. Damn, that landlord again. The same excuses: "You see, *Monsieur le propriétaire*, we're expecting money next week . . . Yes, next week. Absolutely . . . You can positively depend on it . . ." He shouted "*Entrez*" and the door opened. It wasn't the landlord, it was a lady. Beautiful, young and obviously very wealthy . . . A leap from the sofa. "Your servant, Madame . . . Won't you please sit down, Madame? . . . My friend, *le professeur*, will be here in a moment . . ."

She was a little out of breath as she sat down on the couch. "I am not looking for your friend, *le professeur*," she began, giving him a swift but all-seeing glance. "I am looking for you. I'm Betty Rothschild. Would you mind telling me what on earth you're doing here?"

And all the time her eyes were smiling at him, not flirtatiously but amusedly. As if she were some ninety-year-old grandmother scolding her simpleton of a grandchild . . . "I love it here," he replied challengingly. "I intend to stay here a long time. I suppose my father sent you—"

"Not exactly—although he's getting a little worried about you. So long as you were in England we could keep track of you—"

He looked at her aghast. "You mean you knew where I was?"

"My cousin Nathan knew every move you made and reported regularly to your father on your whereabouts—" Her lovely eyes were downright laughing at him; it was very humiliating.

"And so Father knows everything," he said with a hopeless shrug.

She nodded. "But don't worry." There was a new gentleness in her voice. "He loves you very much and he is a very intelligent man. He understands that a young man is entitled to at least one escapade. But he misses you and would like you to come home. He's getting old, you know . . ."

BEYOND DESIRE

Suddenly all the defiance was out of him. He didn't really want to stay in this dreary Paris. He longed to be back with his family again, hear his father's grumbling, come into his mother's sitting room and kiss her hand, see his sisters Fanny and Rebecka again . . . "I miss him too, I miss them all," he murmured. "I've been trying to get hold of myself—"

"I know," she said softly. "You've been hurt. Everyone is at one time or other."

Before he knew it he was talking to her as if she were his sister Fanny, his closest confidante and friend. He told her about Maria, but now he was calm, sensible. "I see now we weren't suited to each other . . . It was just a physical attraction, nothing else . . . She is a gypsy, a wanderer. I want a home, stability . . . Some day I'll meet the right girl for me and I'll be the right man for her and we'll be happy . . ."

Because she nodded and approved and no longer laughed at him, he even burned his bridges behind him and told her how he was supposed to strike a friendship with her, win her sympathy so that she would influence her husband in the matter of the Prussian loan . . . "It was my father's idea," he chuckled. "I was supposed to be very smooth, very clever . . . I guess I'll never make a good diplomat . . ."

She gave a short laugh and rose to go. "On the contrary. You've won my sympathy and friendship. Come to see me before you leave. Sixteen, rue Saint Dominique . . ."

Her perfume remained in the room long after she was gone. He went back to his sofa. How wonderful to know Father had forgiven him and was waiting for his return . . . Yes, the Maria adventure was over. It had been an escapade, nothing more. He was cured of his infatuation. He had learned his lesson. He didn't belong to charming, heartbreaking Paris. He was neither Bohemian nor salon puppet. He wanted a home and music—the kind that is born from silence. And perhaps some day, if Life gave him a second chance—Love . . .

And now it was all over and he was happy. Not deliriously, idiotically as he had been last summer. But happy, as it is permitted to be. Life frowned on great happiness as it did on gen-

PIERRE LA MURE

ius, murder, all extremes. One of these days some orchestra conductor—in Munich or Dresden or Hamburg or perhaps even in Berlin—and that of course would be best—would obligingly resign or die and he would be offered his post.

Meanwhile he was *Advokat* at the bank, specializing in financial matters, doing very little work, dreaming—not dreaming exactly, for there was nothing to dream about—and writing a heap of music. He was content. He slept well, he had his music. He was happy in a bland, vapid sort of way. And that was all right with him . . .

He was standing at the window gazing at the pale summer sky, when he caught the sound of footsteps along the uncarpeted corridor.

"Sit down, Jakob, sit down," said Abraham Mendelssohn shuffling into the office. "Remember this business of the Prussian Treasury Loan?" He accepted Felix's nod as an answer and proceeded. "It's almost settled, but I still need a few more details from the Rothschild Bank."

"Father, if you're going to send me on another of your shady missions—"

Abraham let out a small chuckle. "Nothing of the sort. This time it is not a question of influencing any lady, although your method in Paris—whatever it was—proved most successful. You will deal with Herr Amschel Rothschild, and this is what I'd like you to do."

Patiently Felix listened to his father's instructions. "When do you wish me to leave for Frankfurt, Father?" he asked in due time. "Would the day after tomorrow be satisfactory?"

"Entirely satisfactory," said Abraham Mendelssohn, preparing to rise. "The whole business should take only a few days."

The morning after his arrival in Frankfurt, Felix presented himself at the Rothschild Bank.

"Well, how do you like our little town?" asked Amschel Rothschild, as Felix let himself down into a tufted green armchair.

BEYOND DESIRE

Felix assured him he found Frankfurt full of delightful quaintness. "Of course I've seen very little of it and this is only my first impression."

There was some further leisurely exchange of generalities on the subject of Frankfurt, its people, its monuments, its traditions. Thus, by easy stages, the conversation reached the business matter that was the object of this meeting.

"I think I understand your father's proposition," Rothschild said at last. "Let me think about it a few days and I'll give you my answer. Meanwhile"—he rose to his feet and Felix did the same—"won't you have supper with us, my wife and I—to-night? Two of my brothers, Salomon from Vienna and Charles from Naples, happen to be here and I know they will enjoy meeting you."

Back in the street, Felix found himself with nothing to do and all the time in the world to do it. It was an odd feeling this having nothing to do, no one to see, no place to go. To kill time he ambled through Zeil, Frankfurt's main street.

His attention was caught by a young lady, escorted by a fierce-looking maid carrying a wicker basket. She paused an instant to glance at the display in a window. And, he caught a glimpse of her face. It was the most beautiful face he had ever seen.

Already she was walking away, crossing the street. Now he was crossing the street, making his way through the carriages, keeping his eyes on the girl. How lovely she was! Her profile was faultless. She couldn't be more than eighteen or nineteen. Yet girls did marry early. What if she had a husband, some dull, stout Frankfurt merchant? . . .

At this precise instant she entered a cheese shop. He noticed he was breathing hard and his hand was clenched over the gold knob of his cane. "What's the matter with me?" he asked himself, half aloud. He didn't know, he only knew he must not lose this girl. Cautiously he inched toward the entrance of the shop, peering into the dim, strongly scented interior. He could not see her. Panic overcame him. What if there was another exit, what

PIERRE LA MURE

if she walked out without his seeing her? He rushed into the shop.

Thank God she was there, inspecting the various pieces of cheese, daintily poking their crust. She was talking to the cheesemonger. No, this one was a little too new . . . This one seemed a bit rancid . . . How clever, how conscientious she was! . . . He had never suspected there was so much to buying a hunk of cheese. Imagine her buying cheese for *him*! . . .

The thought sent a shudder of sheer rapture through him. The tradesman was respectful. "Yes, *Fräulein*, you're right, this is the best . . ." God be blessed, the man called her *Fräulein*. She wasn't married . . .

At last the *Fräulein* appeared satisfied. She watched the cheesemonger weigh the piece of cheese in the shiny brass balance. Then with a gracious smile she walked away, her maid behind her.

"What'll it be?" Felix heard the words behind him, but already he was out of the shop.

The young girl and her escort turned into a side street, then another and finally entered Goethe Platz, one of those quiet shady squares that were one of Frankfurt's features. It reminded him of Berkeley Square—a provincial and bourgeois Berkeley Square. From a distance he watched them disappear into one of the severe and elegant mansions that lined the place on all sides. As he neared the door, he noticed a small bronze plate under the bell. On it was written "Jeanrenaud."

It sounded French and unloosened a thousand absurd fancies in his mind. She must be the granddaughter of one of those French emigrés who had found refuge in Frankfurt during the Revolution. A window opened above his head on the second floor and once again he had a glimpse of her. She had removed her bonnet and he saw that she was a blonde. For an instant she stood motionless in the framework of the window, then she withdrew into the mysteriousness of the room.

It didn't occur to him that he cut a rather ludicrous figure standing there, gaping at an open window. For nothing in the

BEYOND DESIRE

world would he have walked away. He spied a public bench facing the house and went to sit on it.

Presently he became aware of a man standing at his side. A glance told him it was a policeman.

"Been watching you for a while," the policeman said, "and it's clear you're a stranger in this town. You've been sitting on this here bench for a mighty long time."

"Frankfurt's a Free City, I've heard. Is there any law against sitting on public benches?"

The policeman fondled his luxuriant mustache while pondering the question. "Well, you see this is a high-class district. Only rich people around here."

"You can see that. This house, for instance," Felix pointed to the Jeanrenaud home. "You see that only very fine people would live in a house like this."

"That's not a house," chuckled the policeman. "That's a French Protestant church. They preach in French, they sing in French, they even pray in French. Up there," he waved to the second-floor windows, "is the pastor's apartment."

"How interesting! A young lady just went in—"

"Blonde with a pretty face and a fat woman with a basket? That's Fräulein Cécile and her cook Catherine. Known her since she was a baby. She lives there with her mother."

"And her father, of course?"

"No. Her father's dead. Died many years ago when he was a young man. Just to give you an idea what a fine man he was, in this town where people don't go to funerals, more than three hundred people went to the cemetery when he died. And not just people from his own church either."

Felix no longer listened. Suddenly all the ebullience, the foolishness had gone out of him. He, Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn, had fallen head over heels in love with the daughter of a Protestant pastor!

III

Felix pushed away the page of music he was writing, and leaned back on his chair. He was knotting his hands behind his head, a familiar gesture of his, when the thought struck him that although he had been married nine months, only now did he really *feel* married.

Marriage was, among many other things, a state of mind. He hadn't felt married during their honeymoon—let alone during the wedding ceremony in Frankfurt's French church, when he had looked at Cécile as though she were a perfect stranger. He hadn't even felt married during those first few months in Düsseldorf.

Now all of a sudden he did.

It was a complex, elusive feeling, yet very real. It transformed your thinking. The things you'd done before appeared suddenly incongruous, absurd—the acts of some younger and silly brother you didn't quite approve of . . . For instance, it was hard to believe that less than two years ago he had followed her into a cheese shop, sat for hours on a public (and very hard) bench, gazed at her window, dreaming dazzling and incoherent dreams. Why, a child would have had more sense! . . . But then falling in love was some sort of mental collapse, an innocent wonderful madness. You became an idiot—a harmless, irresponsible, window-gazing idiot.

In retrospect the whole Frankfurt episode had a glow of unreality, a flavor of operetta. The ball given by Senator Souchay, Cécile's uncle to which the Rothschilds had taken him. "You dance beautifully, Fräulein Jeanrenaud." "Thank you, Herr Mendelssohn"—the first stiff visit in the Jeanrenaud parlor, the ritual gestures of a provincial courtship. And later, back to Berlin, the difficult moment when he had to face his family.

Father had been splendid. Sad, of course, but understanding and superlatively intelligent about the whole thing. He had in-

BEYOND DESIRE

stantly grasped the difficulties arising from the difference of religions. "It's going to take a little time, Jakob. You must be patient." Mother was adamant at first. Her objections were social as well as religious. "My son marrying a pastor's daughter! . . ." In her mouth the "pastor's daughter" sounded abysmally plebeian, the lowest step in the social order, somewhere between a sexton and a gravedigger. But Father was ready. He had gathered enough information about the Jeanrenauds and the Souchays to fill a book. Patiently he had explained that while Jeanrenaud was a poor though distinguished clergyman, his wife, Cécile's mother, was a descendant of a noble French family and one of Frankfurt's heiresses.

Having at last obtained the grudging approval of everyone in the family he had journeyed to Frankfurt, and there with proper formality acquainted himself with Senator Souchay, head of the Souchay clan and like him a banker. It was inevitable that they should like each other on sight, and after that it all was very easy. Father had been introduced to Frau Jeanrenaud and her daughter and proceeded to charm them both with his compliments and his excellent French, all the while making inner observations and reaching definite conclusions. The ladies—especially the pastor's widow—having done the same and the interview having proven mutually favorable, the two bankers had then begun negotiations on the matter of dowry, future inheritances and various clauses of the marriage contract. Both being intelligent, fair and wealthy, they had reached rapid and complete agreement. Whereupon a formal request for Fräulein Cécile Sophie Charlotte Jeanrenaud's hand was addressed and granted amidst much rejoicing, culminating in a formal dinner and the distribution of presents. Father had returned, after making an unexpected detour to Düsseldorf, bringing joyous tidings and glowing reports about his son's future in-laws.

Three weeks later the Jeanrenaud ladies, duly escorted by the Senator, had arrived at 3, Leipzigerstrasse. And then the miracle had taken place—everybody had fallen in love with everybody. To crown it all, sometime in February, a letter had ar-

PIERRE LA MURE

rived from Düsseldorf. An official-looking letter profusely sealed in red wax and signed by the Town's President, Doktor von Worringen. It offered Herr Felix Mendelssohn the post of Direktor of Musical Activities.

They had gone to Paris on their honeymoon. It had been a delight to watch Cécile gasp in wonder, feel her little hand clench his arm at the sight of the Louvre, Notre Dame, the cafés, the dazzling shops. Everyone wanted to meet "*la belle Madame Mendelssohn*." The Rothschilds, James and Betty, had given a magnificent *soirée* in her honor. Naturally Chopin had been on hand. He was still dazzled by his recent success as Paris' fashionable piano teacher. "*Mon cher Felix*, do you know how much I get for a lesson? Twenty francs! . . ." Of course he wanted to introduce Cécile into that world of cosmopolitan aristocracy in which he moved. And so it came to pass that one evening they all had gone to a *soirée dansante* given by Princess Potocka—and there was Maria . . .

A blow is a blow, and there's little difference between shocks—whether of pain or pleasure. He had spied her at once, gowned in a cloud of white tulle and surrounded, of course, by a pack of panting males. He knew she'd seen him, but fortunately dancing was in progress and he had been able to lead Cécile away. Two hours later as he was going to the buffet to fetch her a glass of champagne he had felt a hand on his sleeve. Maria had been waiting for him, concealed behind a velvet portiere. How pale her face was. Her eyes had grown enormous. "Now you have the beautiful wife and maybe you forget me, no?" she breathed in his ear. "But I still love you." Then, before he knew it, her mouth was covering his in a kiss that was like a gulp of some enchanted and burning brew. And she was gone . . .

"Darling, what're you thinking about?" Cécile's voice jerked him out of his thoughts. "Your coffee's getting cold."

"I was thinking of the wonderful time we had in Switzerland

BEYOND DESIRE

after we left Paris." Of such small lies married life was made. "Remember the little village with its toy chalets and our inn that looked like a cuckoo clock? And the river where I used to go fishing?"

"And never caught anything," she added with a twinkle. "Let's go back there this summer for our vacation."

"I'd love to. There's something unique about Switzerland. It's a universe in miniature. You feel you are in another world—a world of beauty and peace." He rested his cup on the small side-table. "I think I'll have a cognac."

She looked at him curiously but rose to pull the bell rope. Gustav appeared and returned a moment later with an assortment of brandy bottles on a silver tray.

Felix took an appreciative sip after warming the glass in his cupped hands. "I know you're thinking I am on my way to Hell," he grinned, catching her covert and anxious glance.

"Not at all," she said testily, going on with her knitting.

"But you do," he insisted. "I can read it on your face." He chuckled softly. "My little pastor's daughter."

"Liquor is the tool of Satan," she said. "And there's nothing wrong about being a pastor's daughter."

"On the contrary. But it gives you such exalted standards of virtue that no man can possibly live up to them." His grin deepened. "Do you know why I'm having this infernal thimbleful of cognac? Because today is our ninth-month wedding anniversary."

"So, you *did* remember!" she cried. "Oh, darling!" She tossed her knitting aside and came to sit next to him on the sofa. "I thought you'd forgotten."

Yes, now he really *felt* married . . . This beautiful pastor's daughter, was his forever. He wanted her at his side for the rest of his life. He no longer regretted anything—anything—from the past. She was his wife and he was her husband. They were one, body and soul. Oh, yes, before them stood Life with its problems, its disconcerting trivialities, its secret disappoint-

PIERRE LA MURE

ments, but they did love each other and their love would endure. Together they would make the journey through the alleys of Time, hand in hand, their hearts beating in unison . . .

That winter Felix applied himself to his duties as Direktor of the Düsseldorf Orchestra. It was not a very good orchestra. Düsseldorf had exalted artistic pretensions, but the musical budget was small.

He did his best. Because he liked them and also because he knew that this Düsseldorf post was the first rung of the ladder. Important cities, especially Berlin, were watching him.

He did something more during those long winter months. He learned the intricacies of provincial life. In this Cécile proved of invaluable help. This twenty-year-old housewife had an unerring social instinct. And one needed it to guide oneself through the maze of small-town social hierarchy.

"But, Cilette," he would wail, "Do we have to invite Worringen and his wife to dinner? They're such bores."

"He is Town President," she would reply with an almost imperceptible tightening of lips. "And she's been very kind to me at the sewing circle."

And so they would have the Worringens to dinner and perhaps von Schadow, the director of the Fine Arts Academy, and Judge Immermann. Immermann, besides being a judge, was a scholar and a poet. He burned with a passion to present his translations of Greek tragedies. Doggedly he harassed the town council with tracts and pamphlets on the creation of a classical theatre and the prodigious benefits Düsseldorf would derive from it.

Those dinners were Cécile's masterpieces. "How wonderful it must be to read Greek and Latin!" she would coo, fluttering her long eyelashes in awe-struck admiration. Felix would smile and say little, remembering the sumptuous dinners at 3, Leipzigerstrasse, graced by the presence of the intellectual and artistic elite of Europe.

He had tried to make Cécile see the differences between great

BEYOND DESIRE

capitals and pretentious little towns. He had made fun of Düsseldorf cultural aspirations, laughed at von Schadow's sanctimonious verbiage and Immermann's Greek delusions. With surprise he had discovered she resented his levity. She really liked those people, was impressed by them. She wouldn't recognize the difference between a von Schadow and a Delacroix, an Immermann and a Goethe.

Spring arrived and brought Felix a bitter disappointment. His candidacy to the conductorship of the Singakademie had run afoul of a great deal of intrigue and opposition. In a long and doleful letter his music teacher Zelter explained why his efforts had been of no avail. The trustees had felt that Felix was too young to head such an important and venerable institution. And then there was the question of religion. The Singakademie was a Christian institution, devoted mostly to sacred music, and the trustees, while admitting his musical superiority, had deemed it unwise to choose as conductor a man of another faith. A certain Rungenhagen had been appointed.

The news shattered Felix. In one stroke his hopes to move to Berlin crumpled to the ground. He fell into a mood of brooding despondency. During this troubled period Cécile was all patience and understanding. Knowing she had never been in sympathy with his Berlin ambitions, he could only admire the selflessness of her devotion.

As soon as they could, they hurried to Switzerland and returned to their toy village over Lake Thunn. Nothing had changed. The inn still looked like a cuckoo clock and the innkeeper welcomed them back with genuine effusiveness. They took long walks through sun-shafted forests, hand in hand, happier than they had ever been, even on their honeymoon.

On his return to Düsseldorf, Felix mentioned to Immermann his lifelong dream to write an opera based on Shakespeare's *Tempest*. At once the judge offered his services as librettist. Felix found himself deluged with reams of German poetry, most of it bad. With dismay he realized he had started an avalanche.

PIERRE LA MURE

Cautiously he ventured some amendments, suggested some slight changes. He came in contact with that most inflammable of all explosives—a poet's vanity.

The would-be librettist turned pale, then angry, then abusive. What did musicians know about poetry? In stammering, incoherent abuse he heaped upon Felix his pent-up resentment. "Nothing but a Jew!" he ended with venomous fury.

Felix blanched and turned away. Next day he quietly informed the town council that for personal reasons he would relinquish his post at the end of the current season, immediately after the Rhine Festival. The Festival was the great musical event of the year. It would be his farewell and he wanted it to be a vindication and a triumph.

It was.

Three days before the Festival, Abraham Mendelssohn arrived, escorted by his usual traveling retinue. "I came to see you, Jakob," he declared with a happy chuckle, "and decide whether or not I was right to let you get out of the banking business."

To Felix, his father's presence was the final incentive to surpass himself. In his honor he performed Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, and when he turned to take his bow he saw him, clapping his hands while tears fell from his filmy eyes.

"I am proud of you, Jakob," the banker said later when they were alone in the study. "I'll go away happy." There was a tender solemnity in his voice. "Until now I've been known as the son of my father, now I'll be known as the father of my son."

For the first time Felix noticed how much his father had aged. He leaned forward and took his hand. "I can never thank you enough for what you've done for me. Thanks to you I am the happiest man in the world. I have a wonderful wife and a new career is opening before me. This morning I received a letter from the trustees of the Singakademie. They want me to meet them before the end of the summer to discuss my appointment as director."

"A great honor indeed for one so young. Have you spoken about it to Cécile?"

BEYOND DESIRE

Felix hesitated. "Not yet, Father. Somehow she feels we'd be happier if we lived in a small town. I'll speak to her when we are on our vacation. She'll understand."

The old man was silent a moment, then he said, "Women have strange intuitions sometimes. It was your mother who suggested our moving to Berlin. You will never regret following Cécile's advice. A good wife is the greatest fortune that can befall a man, even if at times he doesn't think so."

Immediately after Abraham Mendelssohn's departure Cécile began packing and closing the house. With heavy heart she took down the curtains she had so joyously hung two years before. And now they were leaving. Leaving like gypsies, for they didn't know where. Felix had resigned. At the time he had been too hurt and too angry for her to try changing his mind. After the triumph of the Festival the town council and the trustees had pleaded with him to remain. He had declined. Oh, he could be stubborn! . . .

Felix accompanied her on her round of farewell calls. He was courteous as always, said the right things, kept a vapid smile on his face, but she knew he was bored and anxious to leave. At last the day of departure arrived. Felix was gay as a robin as the stagecoach jostled away.

"God, I'm glad it's over!" he said with a sigh of relief. "If anyone mentions music to me I'll shoot him. For two months I want to do nothing but eat, sleep, and lie on the grass with my head in your lap."

The day came, three weeks later, when he did precisely that. Around them the meadow spread like a green carpet. It was mid afternoon and in the cloudless sky the sun hung high and still.

"Do you realize you've been lying more than an hour with your head in my lap?" she said. "Don't you want to look at your mail? It came this morning."

"All right," he grumbled, sitting up. "Let's look at the confounded stuff."

From the basket beside her she pulled a sheaf of letters and

PIERRE LA MURE

held it out to him. He thumbed through the pack of mail, casually tossing envelopes into her lap. Abruptly his hand froze. "What's that?" he muttered to himself.

His face stiffened into a mask of frowning concentration as he broke the wax seals.

"What is it, darling?" she asked when he finished reading the letter.

"It's from the board of trustees of the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig. They're offering me the post of conductor. They say the King himself suggested my name."

"The King. What King?"

"Friedrich Augustus the Second, darling, the King of Saxony. I met him in England when I played for the Queen." He made a gesture of annoyance. "But this is neither here nor there. I won't accept it."

"Why?" Her blue eyes were large with anxiety. "You don't have any other engagement."

He looked at her. The discussion he had dreaded couldn't be avoided any longer. "Well, I—I almost have."

Awkwardly he told her about the offer from the Berlin Singakademie. With growing nervousness he stressed the advantages of the Berlin post. "Think of it, Cilette. I have my family there. We could live with them or have a home of our own, a really beautiful house. We could entertain interesting people."

It was the wrong thing to say and he felt it at once. She did not want a "really beautiful house," she did not want to entertain interesting people . . . "And then the salary is much larger," he added, hoping to arouse her parsimony. "Almost double." He saw she was not impressed. "For Heaven's sake, why are you against our going to Berlin?" he cried. "It's a beautiful city, you'd love it there."

"I am sure I would, but I wish you'd accept the Leipzig post instead." She spoke quietly, with the exasperating meekness of a stubborn and unreasonable child.

"But why?" he repeated, raising his voice. "You must have a reason."

BEYOND DESIRE

"I don't know why," she said with the same infuriating gentleness. "I just have a feeling you should go there."

"A feeling!" This time he shouted the words. He would have welcomed a quarrel, a spirited exchange of arguments. But she was not fighting back, she was merely stating she had a "feeling" he should accept the Leipzig post. "Don't you see, Leipzig is just another little town?" he said, grasping her hands. "Another Düsseldorf. Only a little bigger and with a better orchestra. It's not even the capital of Saxony. The King and the court are in Dresden. The opera house is in Dresden. All Leipzig has is a university, a concert hall in the Drapers' Guild building, the Gewandhaus as they call it. We'll have the same kind of life we've had in Düsseldorf. The same kind of friends. Pompous Herr Professors, fat brewers and wealthy merchants. Is that what you want? . . . Do you want me to be a small-town conductor all my life? Don't you realize that as conductor of the Singakademie I'll be in line for the same post with the Berlin Philharmonic as soon as it becomes vacant? I'll be the first musician in Germany. I—" He stopped wearily. "You don't understand, you just don't."

She leaned closer to him and her voice grew tender with pleading. "I'll go with you to Berlin, my darling, if that's what you want. Please don't think I'm being selfish about this. I swear I am not thinking of my personal preferences. But I have a strange feeling . . . I can't explain it. Like a presentiment. As if God wanted us to go to Leipzig . . ."

There was no reasoning with women. They talked about feelings, presentiments, God . . . You couldn't argue against that . . . Father had said to follow her advice. Perhaps it was one of those intuitions women were supposed to have? . . . And then she was his wife. He wanted to make her happy . . . "All right," he said with a smile of surrender. "We'll try Leipzig for a year or two."

IV

On that festive afternoon in April, His Majesty Friedrich Augustus, looking very handsome in a gold and scarlet field marshal's uniform, was standing on a baldaquined dais upon the stage of the Gewandhaus Hall and telling Leipzigers how right they were to be proud of their fine Music Conservatorium and its founder-director, Doktor Mendelssohn. "Where, in the whole of Germany—nay, in the whole of Europe—can one find another such brilliant institution of musical learning? . . . Although but three years old, its fame has already spread beyond the horizon to distant America . . ."

His Majesty turned to Felix, who was sitting at his right at one of the two tables flanking the royal dais. "When, ten years ago, I suggested his name to the trustees of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, he was then a young man of exceptional promise. To-day he stands as the most famous musician in Europe."

Wearily Felix ran his slender hand over his eyes. Ten years! Was it really as long as that? It seemed only a few years ago that he was lying on the grass of that Swiss meadow and Cécile was telling about that strange "feeling" of hers that they should go to Leipzig. For two or three years after their arrival he still had longed for Berlin and the life of great cities. He had fretted, talked about moving away from this "Düsseldorf-on-the-Pleiss," as he called it. Then the children had started to arrive, and before he knew it, it was too late. He would spend his life in Leipzig and that was all right. After all, wasn't he happy here? Didn't he have everything he could want? Of course . . . A lovely and faithful wife who was also a perfect mother, a diligent *Hausfrau* . . . Five beautiful children—three boys and two girls . . . More money than they could ever need . . .

Now the King was addressing the audience, praising their

BEYOND DESIRE

love of music, tossing compliments to the city officials. His Lordship the Mayor, the councilmen, the trustees of the Gewandhaus Orchestra.

Felix repressed a smile. How well he knew them, these champions of the arts! . . . Unscrupulous merchants, arrogant drapers and brewers, hard to their employees, tricky among themselves. With Christoph Muller, the Mayor, Felix had struck up something like a friendship. He had grown to like the red-haired, loudmouthed politician, who was less hypocritical than the others and capable of an occasional disinterested good deed. With all of the others he performed the ritual gestures prescribed by small-town etiquette and maintained cordial, if not warm, relations. He was respected, even well liked, but after ten years in Leipzig he was still "the foreigner from Berlin."

And I guess I'll always be, he thought, forcing himself back to reality. The King was reaching the end of his address. In tones of pontifical unction he was urging his beloved subjects to continue their generous and heartfelt support of the Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Music Conservatorium, which, under Doktor Mendelssohn's inspired leadership, was spreading the fame of their glorious city to the far ends of the world.

The anniversary ceremony was over.

"Wasn't it wonderful, Felix!" cried Cécile as they were driving home. "I was so proud of you I wanted to cry. Did you hear what His Majesty said?"

"About what?"

"About you." She gave him a sharp glance. "Weren't you listening?"

"Of course, but I don't remember his saying anything special. I thought it was the same flowery address he'd delivered last year and the year before, full of lofty generalities about harmony and progress and compliments to everyone."

She frowned. This kind of talk almost smacked of *lèse-majesté*. "I thought His Majesty spoke beautifully," she said, a shade of defiance in her voice. "He said the Conservatorium was your monument and he looked upon you as the First Citi-

IV

On that festive afternoon in April, His Majesty Friedrich Augustus, looking very handsome in a gold and scarlet field marshal's uniform, was standing on a baldaquined dais upon the stage of the Gewandhaus Hall and telling Leipzigers how right they were to be proud of their fine Music Conservatorium and its founder-director, Doktor Mendelssohn. "Where, in the whole of Germany—nay, in the whole of Europe—can one find another such brilliant institution of musical learning? . . . Although but three years old, its fame has already spread beyond the horizon to distant America . . ."

His Majesty turned to Felix, who was sitting at his right at one of the two tables flanking the royal dais. "When, ten years ago, I suggested his name to the trustees of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, he was then a young man of exceptional promise. To-day he stands as the most famous musician in Europe."

Wearily Felix ran his slender hand over his eyes. Ten years! Was it really as long as that? It seemed only a few years ago that he was lying on the grass of that Swiss meadow and Cécile was telling about that strange "feeling" of hers that they should go to Leipzig. For two or three years after their arrival he still had longed for Berlin and the life of great cities. He had fretted, talked about moving away from this "Düsseldorf-on-the-Pleiss," as he called it. Then the children had started to arrive, and before he knew it, it was too late. He would spend his life in Leipzig and that was all right. After all, wasn't he happy here? Didn't he have everything he could want? Of course . . . A lovely and faithful wife who was also a perfect mother, a diligent *Hausfrau* . . . Five beautiful children—three boys and two girls . . . More money than they could ever need . . .

Now the King was addressing the audience, praising their

BEYOND DESIRE

love of music, tossing compliments to the city officials. His Lordship the Mayor, the councilmen, the trustees of the Gewandhaus Orchestra.

Felix repressed a smile. How well he knew them, these champions of the arts! . . . Unscrupulous merchants, arrogant drapers and brewers, hard to their employees, tricky among themselves. With Christoph Muller, the Mayor, Felix had struck up something like a friendship. He had grown to like the red-haired, loudmouthed politician, who was less hypocritical than the others and capable of an occasional disinterested good deed. With all of the others he performed the ritual gestures prescribed by small-town etiquette and maintained cordial, if not warm, relations. He was respected, even well liked, but after ten years in Leipzig he was still "the foreigner from Berlin."

And I guess I'll always be, he thought, forcing himself back to reality. The King was reaching the end of his address. In tones of pontifical unction he was urging his beloved subjects to continue their generous and heartfelt support of the Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Music Conservatorium, which, under Doktor Mendelssohn's inspired leadership, was spreading the fame of their glorious city to the far ends of the world.

The anniversary ceremony was over.

"Wasn't it wonderful, Felix!" cried Cécile as they were driving home. "I was so proud of you I wanted to cry. Did you hear what His Majesty said?"

"About what?"

"About you." She gave him a sharp glance. "Weren't you listening?"

"Of course, but I don't remember his saying anything special. I thought it was the same flowery address he'd delivered last year and the year before, full of lofty generalities about harmony and progress and compliments to everyone."

She frowned. This kind of talk almost smacked of *lèse-majesté*. "I thought His Majesty spoke beautifully," she said, a shade of defiance in her voice. "He said the Conservatorium was your monument and he looked upon you as the First Citi-

PIERRE LA MURE

zen of his kingdom." A note of impatience pierced in her tone. "Didn't you hear?"

"I am sorry, I must have been thinking of something else." He felt the impact of reproach in her eyes.

"What were you thinking about?"

"How fast time flies. I hadn't realized we've been here ten years."

A shadow of anxiety mingled with annoyance brushed across her face. "Still thinking about Berlin? . . . Aren't you happy here?"

"Of course, darling," he said. There was no use trying to explain to her that one could be unhappy without any tangible cause for unhappiness. It was one of those things that had grown between them, this incapacity of sensing each other's moods. "As happy as anyone can be. Incidentally if the weather's nice tomorrow do you think we could drive to Schmidt's farm in the afternoon?" He felt she was displeased and tried to arouse her sympathy. "The poor man's been asking me for so long. It'd make him and his wife terribly happy if we came—even for a short while."

"We'll see," she said evasively. Hermann Schmidt, a stocky old man with a crown of fuzzy white hair around his bald pate, was the flutist and the dean of the Gewandhaus Orchestra. His wife had been a cook, it seemed. The most ordinary sort of people. Yet Felix could call the chancellor of the university a bore and be friendly with people like the Schmidts. At times she just didn't understand him, didn't understand him at all.

The first thing Felix noticed when he awoke the following morning was that Cécile was not at his side. Obviously she had gone to church, taking Karl and Marie with her. That's why the house was so quiet . . . The second thing was that it was raining. Well, that took care of the Schmidts. It was better that way. He wouldn't have to show up at the farm alone with some improbable excuse as to why Frau Mendelssohn had found it impossible to come and was sending her regrets.

Oddly he had looked forward to driving to the country,

BEYOND DESIRE

spending a few hours with the Schmidts. They were warm and friendly. Real people . . . Now with the junket to the farm off, the day stretched before him dull and empty. Oh, well, it couldn't be helped, and what couldn't be helped should be endured. He smiled. Pretty soon he'd be quoting proverbs and almanac aphorisms, as Cécile did . . .

Breakfast over, he went down to his study. An unfinished page of orchestral music lay on his desk, and his eyes traveled slowly over the neatly quilled staves. As he read on, the chillness of discouragement descended upon him like a cold damp cloak. What had happened to him? What had become of the winged iridescence of the *Midsummer Overture*? The colorful descriptiveness of *The Hebrides*, the lyricism of the Italian Symphony?

How long was it since he had felt the quickening heartbeat, the gushing rapture of inspiration? Two years. Since the Violin Concerto . . . And before that, he didn't remember. Four, five years—maybe more . . . Many times he had felt the wonderful old excitement, the growing exaltation that used to reach a climax in a burst of relieving flow of music, but now the stirring and churning of his mind turned to pain, changed into those blinding, racking migraines that made his brain throb and his eyeballs burst in their sockets. In somber defiance he had selected larger and larger tasks, as if the size of the canvas would bring a secret reassurance of his powers. Massive oratorios, huge chorales, enormous billows of sound which somehow never took flight. With each succeeding opus he had known the growing terror of sterility, and success—for, ironically, success clung to him—had merely barbed the stab of failure.

Yet he had acknowledged the acclaim, bowed with smiling modesty to the applause and stifled his qualms. But he could no longer. Perhaps it was the rain, perhaps the grayness of this room, perhaps himself . . . Suddenly he couldn't pretend any longer. He knew that some stealthy and deadly disease dwelt in his brain, and he was ill, desperately ill, and would never get well.

Feverishly his mind careened into the future. How long did

PIERRE LA MURE

he still have? . . . How long would it take death to finish its work? Two years . . . three years? Perhaps many years. After all, his father had died at sixty, his grandfather at fifty-seven—both in their sleep, as everyone should die . . . His mother was still hale and hearty at seventy-one . . . Why should he die at thirty-seven? . . . Besides there were doctors. Some fine ones right here in Leipzig. Medicine was making tremendous strides . . . And then perhaps he was imagining things. Head-aches? . . . Everyone had headaches.

He was startled by a knock on the door. Catherine, the maid, appeared, filling the doorway. "His Lordship the Mayor's here, Herr Doktor. He'd like to know if you're home."

"Of course, I am at home," he exclaimed, springing to his feet. "Let His Lordship in."

Christoph Muller entered, beaming. "Well, how's Saxony's First Citizen?" the burgomaster said crossing to his usual chair across the desk. "I hope I don't disturb you from your creative labors. I just couldn't stomach another of Reverend Hagen's sermons. Not after yesterday's oratorical orgy. So I asked my beloved wife to present my regrets to our dear pastor and tell him I was sick in bed." He grinned at his own deception.

"You couldn't have chosen a better time," said Felix with unusual effusiveness. "What will you have? Sherry or port, or perhaps a little schnapps?" He read the Mayor's preference in his eyes. "I think I'll join you and have one, too."

A moment later they were discoursing in convivial leisure of the previous day's affair at the Conservatorium. "I thought it went off rather well," remarked the Mayor, taking a sip of schnapps. "The speeches were too long, but they always are. I like making speeches but I hate listening to them."

"I wish there were some way to dispense with those flowery harangues that mean nothing and bore everybody. Incidentally, I wish His Majesty hadn't made that 'First Citizen' remark. If the King of Prussia ever hears of it, I'll be in a fine mess."

"I wouldn't worry. I don't think anyone saw anything in it but a well-deserved tribute. Except perhaps Kruger." His tone

BEYOND DESIRE

lowered as he looked down at the glass in his hand. "He is such a treacherous and jealous scoundrel. Dangerous too . . ." There was a pause. His eyes rested speculatively on his drink. "Do you know, Felix," he said, "sometimes I wonder if the man isn't mad. I mean it. I don't mean he is a ranting lunatic foaming at the mouth, but I've seen a strange look come into his eyes sometimes. Believe me, this man is capable of doing something crazy. It wouldn't matter, but as you know he is very wealthy, he is part owner of the newspaper and he is burning inside with the obsession of running this town. He is a fanatic. Did you know he was the only member of the board who voted against your appointment as conductor even after His Majesty had suggested your name?"

"No, I didn't," said Felix with a shock. "Of course I heard rumors he is an anti-Semite."

"He is anti-everybody. Once he tried to have the council close a hospital operated by Catholic nuns. Another time he wanted us to pass an ordinance forbidding all churches to ring bells on Sunday except Saint Thomas." Absently he twisted the stem of his glass between his fingers. "Watch out for him, Felix. Kruger will try to hurt you if he ever has a chance and he'll use every means, fair or foul. That's the thing I hate most about him. I know he'd use the fact I'm keeping Olga if he dared. But we've been in this town for three centuries—one of my great, great-great-great-grandfathers was burgomaster at the time of Luther—and he's watching himself."

"It's an unpleasant sensation," remarked Felix, "this feeling that someone's trying to do you harm. Surely Kruger doesn't want to conduct the Gewandhaus Orchestra."

"No, but you're a superior man." With his hand he cut short Felix's gesture of protest. "I don't mean to pay you a compliment, but to explain to you how he thinks. You are a superior man, a famous musician, now the First Citizen of the Kingdom of Saxony—and a non-Christian, as he says. All this rankles. I tell you the man's crazy."

His broad chest rose and fell in a long wheezy sigh. "That's

PIERRE LA MURE

the trouble with these small towns. Not enough doing. Minds grow stagnant and fester. Take this Olga business, for instance. All right, I have a mistress. It doesn't mean I don't love my wife. In Berlin nobody would pay attention, but here people talk about it because they haven't anything else to do. You know, Felix, I've often wondered why you've remained so long in this town."

"Frankly, I don't know quite myself. I've often asked myself this question. Cécile was very keen on my coming here. She had a feeling I must come here, you know, one of those mysterious intuitions women have sometimes."

"I know. Elsa has them all the time and they invariably prove wrong." Muller gulped down his drink. "I must be going," he said, "or I'll meet everybody on their way back from church and Reverend Hagen will immediately be informed that instead of being sick in bed I came to pay you a call. That's the trouble with these damn little towns. You can't make a move without everybody knowing about it."

Cécile returned from church shortly before lunch and when she entered the room he knew she'd already been told about the Mayor's visit.

"What did you two talk about?" she asked at lunch with that instinctive suspicion of women for men's conversations in which they had no part.

"Nothing special," he said. "He was bored, I guess, and dropped in for a little chat."

"And a few schnapps. I noticed the bottle and the two glasses."

He looked at her swiftly with a beginning of anger. "Any objections?"

"None whatever." Her lips tightened. "I merely think people shouldn't drink in the morning. It spoils the appetite. You see, you ate almost nothing."

He felt like a rebuked child. If only she were unreasonable

BEYOND DESIRE

or raised her voice like so many wives. But she didn't and she was always right. It was the way she spoke, the look in her eyes. Her schoolmistress look, as he called it. And each time it widened a little more the gap between them.

After lunch they repaired to the study as they usually did on Sunday afternoons. For a while he pretended to work. Outside the rain had stopped but the sky had not cleared. She went on with her knitting. Now and then he glanced at her over the pages. Again her loveliness struck him. It always did, he couldn't get used to it. At twenty-eight—she would be twenty-nine in October—she was more beautiful than at the time of their marriage. Her face had the perfection of classical statuary. Virtue was as natural to her as the gold sheen in her hair. Then why wasn't he happy? Why had the chasm between them grown so wide?

A thought struck him unexpectedly. "Darling, did you ever figure out why you wanted so much for us to come to Leipzig?"

She looked at him with surprise. "It seemed like the right thing at the time. And it was, wasn't it?"

"Of course," he said hastily. No, he wasn't going to ask her to move to Berlin . . . "But you said you had a 'feeling'—I remember you used that word—as if God wanted us to come here."

"It's true. At the time I felt as if a hand tugged at my sleeve and a voice spoke inside me."

He was silent a moment.

"I'm going to tell you a secret," he said. "In the beginning I used to think God wanted us to come here so that I'd find the rest of that Bach score. You know, the manuscript in the red leather folder . . . After all, Johann Sebastian Bach lived in this town most of his life, and I thought I might run across the rest of the manuscript. For months, whenever I had a moment to myself, I used to browse through old book stores and libraries. I even went to Saint Thomas Church—Bach used to be a choir-master there—and asked permission to search their archives.

PIERRE LA MURE

The man I spoke to thought I was crazy. He'd never heard of Johann Sebastian Bach and he told me they didn't even have any musical archives."

"Really?" She listened politely but he knew she was not interested. "That's too bad."

His flurry of excitement kept him going a few seconds longer, but now there was an undertone of deflated irony in his voice. "Already I could see myself discovering the manuscript and performing it at a Gewandhaus concert. Just like that first performance of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony I gave a few years ago, remember?"

She nodded but he saw she did not remember. To her, Schubert's Unfinished Symphony had been just another bulk of music paper lying on his desk a few weeks and performed at some regular Gewandhaus concert.

"Tell me, Hans, how many natural keys are there in music?"

Hans Bluth sprang to his feet. "Two, Herr Direktor. C major and A minor. Any other is a transposition of one of them."

"Good. Now pay attention, for this is a little more difficult. How do you recognize the major key from the minor?"

Again the boyish treble squeaked through the classroom. Smiling, Felix ran his hand over his eyes. Once he had been like this, replying to Zelter's questions with the same childish trepidation. Now, thirty years later, he was listening to the same parrotlike answer. It was nice, rather touching—and also rather ridiculous. Downright idiotic, if you stopped to think of it. Here he was, Felix Mendelssohn, at the summit of his career, decorated with the Pour le Merite Cross, the highest German order, and what was he doing? He was teaching musical catechism to a roomful of provincial youngsters. And why? Because ten years ago in a Swiss meadow his wife had had a "feeling" they should move to Leipzig! Ten years he had lost so that Cécile could have the life she liked, attend sewing circles, haggle over trifles with shopkeepers and go shopping with dowdy ladies in quaint and musty stores. Hadn't he any rights? After all he still was young

BEYOND DESIRE

—you couldn't call thirty-seven old, could you? He was rich, famous and in good health. His headaches were merely caused by overwork and the stifling drudgery of his life in this small town. Well, he was going to change all that, he was going to speak to Cécile.

"Very good, Hans," he said as the school bell rang in the corridor. "Now for the next lesson you will study—"

A moment later he was in his office, pacing the thick green carpet, his hands clasped behind his back. Another day gone, he thought. Another laborious, uneventful, tedious day. In Paris, Vienna, Berlin the streets must be humming with lit carriages and the lights of cafés. And he was here, alone in a silent and darkening office waiting for his wife to take him home to dinner and a long quiet evening in the study.

He heard the door open and whirled around. Cécile was entering the room, looking lovely in her beribboned bonnet and cape. She leaned down and kissed his brow. "Forgive me, darling," she said, a little out of breath. "I went shopping with Elsa."

"And how is Her Ladyship?" he asked, rising. For an instant he thought of broaching the subject of moving away from Leipzig, but he judged the moment inopportune. He would speak to her after dinner in the study.

Excitedly she told him about her tour of the town's various dress shops with the Mayor's wife. "But she couldn't make up her mind," she said as they reached the entrance, "and so we finally drove to Dorbeck's, on Markt Platz. You should see those new Paris fashions! Skirts are twice as wide as last year." Still talking, she bent down and with a rustle of taffeta slipped into the carriage.

"Good evening, Gustav." With one foot in the door Felix turned to his old valet. "You must be tired with all this driving around. Let's go home."

"No, no!" cried Cécile, leaning forward. "Stop first at Koehler's. It's on our way home," she explained as Felix took his place at her side.

PIERRE LA MURE

The man I spoke to thought I was crazy. He'd never heard of Johann Sebastian Bach and he told me they didn't even have any musical archives."

"Really?" She listened politely but he knew she was not interested. "That's too bad."

His flurry of excitement kept him going a few seconds longer, but now there was an undertone of deflated irony in his voice. "Already I could see myself discovering the manuscript and performing it at a Gewandhaus concert. Just like that first performance of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony I gave a few years ago, remember?"

She nodded but he saw she did not remember. To her, Schubert's Unfinished Symphony had been just another bulk of music paper lying on his desk a few weeks and performed at some regular Gewandhaus concert.

"Tell me, Hans, how many natural keys are there in music?"

Hans Bluth sprang to his feet. "Two, Herr Direktor. C major and A minor. Any other is a transposition of one of them."

"Good. Now pay attention, for this is a little more difficult. How do you recognize the major key from the minor?"

Again the boyish treble squeaked through the classroom. Smiling, Felix ran his hand over his eyes. Once he had been like this, replying to Zelter's questions with the same childish trepidation. Now, thirty years later, he was listening to the same parrotlike answer. It was nice, rather touching—and also rather ridiculous. Downright idiotic, if you stopped to think of it. Here he was, Felix Mendelssohn, at the summit of his career, decorated with the Pour le Merite Cross, the highest German order, and what was he doing? He was teaching musical catechism to a roomful of provincial youngsters. And why? Because ten years ago in a Swiss meadow his wife had had a "feeling" they should move to Leipzig! Ten years he had lost so that Cécile could have the life she liked, attend sewing circles, haggle over trifles with shopkeepers and go shopping with dowdy ladies in quaint and musty stores. Hadn't he any rights? After all he still was young

BEYOND DESIRE

—you couldn't call thirty-seven old, could you? He was rich, famous and in good health. His headaches were merely caused by overwork and the stifling drudgery of his life in this small town. Well, he was going to change all that, he was going to speak to Cécile.

"Very good, Hans," he said as the school bell rang in the corridor. "Now for the next lesson you will study—"

A moment later he was in his office, pacing the thick green carpet, his hands clasped behind his back. Another day gone, he thought. Another laborious, uneventful, tedious day. In Paris, Vienna, Berlin the streets must be humming with lit carriages and the lights of cafés. And he was here, alone in a silent and darkening office waiting for his wife to take him home to dinner and a long quiet evening in the study.

He heard the door open and whirled around. Cécile was entering the room, looking lovely in her beribonned bonnet and cape. She leaned down and kissed his brow. "Forgive me, darling," she said, a little out of breath. "I went shopping with Elsa."

"And how is Her Ladyship?" he asked, rising. For an instant he thought of broaching the subject of moving away from Leipzig, but he judged the moment inopportune. He would speak to her after dinner in the study.

Excitedly she told him about her tour of the town's various dress shops with the Mayor's wife. "But she couldn't make up her mind," she said as they reached the entrance, "and so we finally drove to Dorbeck's, on Markt Platz. You should see those new Paris fashions! Skirts are twice as wide as last year." Still talking, she bent down and with a rustle of taffeta slipped into the carriage.

"Good evening, Gustav." With one foot in the door Felix turned to his old valet. "You must be tired with all this driving around. Let's go home."

"No, no!" cried Cécile, leaning forward. "Stop first at Koehler's. It's on our way home," she explained as Felix took his place at her side.

PIERRE LA MURE

The man I spoke to thought I was crazy. He'd never heard of Johann Sebastian Bach and he told me they didn't even have any musical archives."

"Really?" She listened politely but he knew she was not interested. "That's too bad."

His flurry of excitement kept him going a few seconds longer, but now there was an undertone of deflated irony in his voice. "Already I could see myself discovering the manuscript and performing it at a Gewandhaus concert. Just like that first performance of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony I gave a few years ago, remember?"

She nodded but he saw she did not remember. To her, Schubert's Unfinished Symphony had been just another bulk of music paper lying on his desk a few weeks and performed at some regular Gewandhaus concert.

"Tell me, Hans, how many natural keys are there in music?"

Hans Bluth sprang to his feet. "Two, Herr Direktor. C major and A minor. Any other is a transposition of one of them."

"Good. Now pay attention, for this is a little more difficult. How do you recognize the major key from the minor?"

Again the boyish treble squeaked through the classroom. Smiling, Felix ran his hand over his eyes. Once he had been like this, replying to Zelter's questions with the same childish trepidation. Now, thirty years later, he was listening to the same parrotlike answer. It was nice, rather touching—and also rather ridiculous. Downright idiotic, if you stopped to think of it. Here he was, Felix Mendelssohn, at the summit of his career, decorated with the Pour le Merite Cross, the highest German order, and what was he doing? He was teaching musical catechism to a roomful of provincial youngsters. And why? Because ten years ago in a Swiss meadow his wife had had a "feeling" they should move to Leipzig! Ten years he had lost so that Cécile could have the life she liked, attend sewing circles, haggle over trifles with shopkeepers and go shopping with dowdy ladies in quaint and musty stores. Hadn't he any rights? After all he still was young

BEYOND DESIRE

—you couldn't call thirty-seven old, could you? He was rich, famous and in good health. His headaches were merely caused by overwork and the stifling drudgery of his life in this small town. Well, he was going to change all that, he was going to speak to Cécile.

"Very good, Hans," he said as the school bell rang in the corridor. "Now for the next lesson you will study—"

A moment later he was in his office, pacing the thick green carpet, his hands clasped behind his back. Another day gone, he thought. Another laborious, uneventful, tedious day. In Paris, Vienna, Berlin the streets must be humming with lit carriages and the lights of cafés. And he was here, alone in a silent and darkening office waiting for his wife to take him home to dinner and a long quiet evening in the study.

He heard the door open and whirled around. Cécile was entering the room, looking lovely in her beribboned bonnet and cape. She leaned down and kissed his brow. "Forgive me, darling," she said, a little out of breath. "I went shopping with Elsa."

"And how is Her Ladyship?" he asked, rising. For an instant he thought of broaching the subject of moving away from Leipzig, but he judged the moment inopportune. He would speak to her after dinner in the study.

Excitedly she told him about her tour of the town's various dress shops with the Mayor's wife. "But she couldn't make up her mind," she said as they reached the entrance, "and so we finally drove to Dorbeck's, on Markt Platz. You should see those new Paris fashions! Skirts are twice as wide as last year." Still talking, she bent down and with a rustle of taffeta slipped into the carriage.

"Good evening, Gustav." With one foot in the door Felix turned to his old valet. "You must be tired with all this driving around. Let's go home."

"No, no!" cried Cécile, leaning forward. "Stop first at Koehler's. It's on our way home," she explained as Felix took his place at her side.

PIERRE LA MURE

She was still chatting away about those "ridiculous Paris fashions" when the carriage came to a halt in front of Martin Koehler's shop.

"I'll just be a minute," she said as he helped her out of the brougham.

"I might just as well go in with you." He pushed back the door and followed her. "You might start a haggling bout with the poor man and I'll be sitting there for an hour."

In the fuliginous glow of tallow candles the shop looked like some nightmarish medieval slaughter house. Martin Koehler himself, his bare and hairy arms protruding from his blood-spattered apron, was engaged in weighing a piece of meat under a hatchet-faced woman's watchful eye. "Be quick with that paper, will you?" he shouted. "There's people waiting in here." Returning to the hatchet-faced customer, he explained they had run out of wrapping paper but his wife was bringing down another stack from stock lying in the attic.

Presently Frau Koehler, half concealed behind the heap of paper in her arms, kicked open the door and made her way to the counter, where she dumped her load with a sigh of relief. Felix, abandoned by Cécile, who was inspecting a thick slice of steak, watched the butcher's wife bend down and puff her cheeks to blow the layer of dust lying on top of the stack.

"Ach! This time we've got music!" she beamed, wiping the sweat from her brow with the back of her hand.

Gruffly her husband shoved her aside, his hand already lifted to slam down the hatchet-faced woman's piece of meat. It was then that Felix's eyes happened to brush over the first page. His blood turned cold and his heart stood still, for there, written in ancient and yellowed cursive, he had read the words: "The Passion of Our Lord, According to Saint Matthew, by Johann Sebastian Bach."

V

"It is my pleasure to inform the board that we may be able to secure Monsieur Frederic Chopin as our first recitalist of the winter's season." Felix ran his eyes along the table at the trustees' complacent faces, drowsily smiling at him in the after-lunch digestive torpor. "As you are well aware, Monsieur Chopin is not only an outstanding pianist, but also a composer of exceptional talent."

"Of course," nodded Muller, the Mayor. "By all means let's have Monsieur Chopin." He seized his gavel and perfunctorily glanced at the trustees. "All in accord?"

Heads nodded in casual assent, and he was about to lower his gavel when Wilhelm Kruger raised his spidery hand.

"I do not wish to abuse the board's patience," said the First Councilman, "but there's a matter I think we should discuss before giving our approval to Monsieur Chopin's concert."

The trustees looked at him with a mixture of boredom and uneasy curiosity. Christoph Muller waited, gavel in hand, a squint of irritation in his eyes. Now what did he want, that one? Was he going to stir up trouble here as he did on the city council? "Please be brief," he snapped.

"We all agree that persons in public life, whatever their field, should give an example of a blameless conduct, don't we?" Kruger began, looking away from the Mayor and addressing himself to the other trustees.

Abruptly the atmosphere in the room had changed. The board's members had caught the allusion to the Mayor's mistress and were now sitting straight in their brocaded chairs, sensing the approach of a clash.

"If the spectacle of moral turpitude is given by those in high places," Kruger went on, "how can we expect obedience and respect from the lower classes?"

The Mayor felt a flush of anger rise to his face in a wave of

PIERRE LA MURE

prickly heat. His hand closed in a tight fist around the gavel's handle. Dirty, sanctimonious blackguard. If only he weren't so powerful and didn't know so much . . . "We do appreciate the inspiring value of these remarks," he broke in with a dangerous smile, "but the board would appreciate it if the Honorable Trustee would confine his observations to the matter at hand, namely, Monsieur Chopin's concert."

Kruger swallowed the rebuke and nodded with sly meekness. "I'm coming to it, Your Lordship. For several years Monsieur Chopin has given the revolting spectacle of his affair with a woman novelist who calls herself George Sand. Now, as the trustees of a public institution we have a moral responsibility to the people of this city and I, for one, question the moral fitness of this artist to appear in our Gewandhaus Hall."

"You—what?" Felix's words exploded in the ensuing silence with the impact of a pistol shot and the trustees stiffened.

"I am not addressing you, Herr Direktor," Kruger flung over his shoulder.

"But I am addressing you, Herr Kruger. Some artists have been saints and some have been rogues. Some have been heroes and some cowards. It doesn't in the least affect their artistic stature."

"I take it you approve of Monsieur Chopin's conduct," said Kruger icily.

"I neither do nor don't. I merely point out that his private life is irrelevant. He is a great pianist and that is and should be enough."

"I'd like to say that for a man who's been called Saxony's First Citizen your moral standards are very pliable. Will you deny Chopin and George Sand are lovers?"

"I neither deny nor admit it. I simply don't know. Perhaps you'll tell us how *you* know they are lovers. Do you possess some secret information on the matter?"

Kruger shrugged. "This is ridiculous. Everyone knows it."

"Well, I don't," said Felix with a great show of innocence. "Monsieur Chopin lives in Paris, Ten, Place d'Orléans. Madame

BEYOND DESIRE

Sand spends most of the year at her country home, the Chateau de Nohant. True, he has been her guest there, but so have Balzac, Liszt, Berlioz, Delacroix and most of the great artists of our time. Are they also her lovers?"

He knew he was going too far, making a mortal enemy, but the sight of this treacherous old man smearing his friend's name sent him into a passion of fury. Already he felt the throbbing in his temples that announced the coming of a headache. For an instant he longed to resign, profit from this incident to move away from Leipzig. The vision of Chopin faded, and another flashed through his mind. He couldn't resign, he needed his orchestra to perform the *Passion* . . . "I think this discussion has already lasted too long," he said, tiredly passing his hand over his aching brow. "A man's private life is his own. All freedoms are worthless without the freedom of privacy. I hope the board will agree with me. Whatever its decision I shall abide by it."

The Mayor gave a circling glance. "I am sure I express the board's opinion in thanking both our distinguished Herr Direktor and the Honorable Trustee for their exchange of views." He was speaking in his political tone of voice, smoothing feelings, bringing peace like a benevolent umpire between excited and foolish contestants. "It is from such discussions that progress is made."

He felt around him the trustees' approving nods and relieved smiles. He knew and understood them well, these selfish and cautious burghers who played at being art patrons. They didn't care whether Chopin played or not, whether he had a mistress or not. They didn't want trouble. An open rift between the Mayor and his First Councilman might degenerate into a local feud and they might be forced into taking sides.

Felix did not listen any longer. He felt tired, curiously dispirited. His head throbbed painfully. He had made a mortal enemy and a powerful one. Why hadn't he let someone else tackle Kruger? . . . He had weakened his position just at the time when he needed the board's support to perform the *Pas-*

PIERRE LA MURE

sion . . . It would not be easy to convince them, get them to allocate the necessary funds for the chorus, the soloists, the additional orchestra rehearsals . . .

He felt despondent and alone. If only Cécile understood, if only she were at his side, if only she could understand that he must perform the Passion, that this was the true reason for his coming to Leipzig. But she couldn't. Strangely she, who had felt the mysterious impulse to come to Leipzig, couldn't understand that a bundle of old paper could give a meaning to a life. He had played for her some fragments of the Passion, tried to make her feel the magnificence of this gigantic work. He had read in her eyes her bewilderment. How could a man get so exercised over some old church music? . . . Poor Cilette! He was asking too much of her. Only great loves were blind enough to create blind faith . . .

"Did you tell the board about the Passion?" Cécile asked at dinner that evening.

He shook his head. "Didn't have a chance. Instead we wasted a lot of time discussing the morals of artists . . . By the way, I picked a nice row with Kruger."

His light tone did not deceive her. "A row?" Her brow creased with anxiety. "About what?"

"Chopin. Kruger thought he was morally unfit to appear in the hall. He got me so mad that I blew up and really told him what I thought of him."

"I wish you hadn't antagonized him," she said with doleful censure. "He's such an important man."

He knew her remark was objective and well meant, yet it infuriated him. "Perhaps I should go and apologize?" he suggested in a flash of bitter humor. "Do you think he might forgive me, if I went down on my knees?"

Her eyes turned cold. "You don't have to be sarcastic," she said through tight lips. "I merely remarked I was sorry you'd antagonized him, that's all."

"Which does credit to your kind heart."

BEYOND DESIRE

She lowered her lids and her face closed in a mask of hurt remoteness. They did not speak any more after that. They avoided each other's eyes and nibbled at their food. Dinner over, they rose and in strained silence passed into the study.

There were things she simply didn't comprehend—and that's all there was to it. Anyway, there was no time for confidences. His days were crowded with his heavy schedule of teaching at the Conservatorium, orchestra rehearsals and bi-weekly concerts in Gewandhaus Hall. In addition, there was now this gigantic score of the Passion. He studied it each evening after dinner and every day his admiration increased. This was indeed a cathedral of sounds, the work of a genius of almost frightening stature. It would take the combined efforts and talents of a great many people to achieve a fine performance. Also a great deal of money . . . And the board of trustees had a repugnance to spending money. They would be even more reluctant to doing so on some forgotten work by an obscure Saint Thomas choir-master. He would have to be very persuasive. And this time he would have to be patient and not lose his temper and not get into any argument . . .

He was being patient that afternoon as he explained to the trustees how he had come across the manuscript and how important it was that it be performed. "In my opinion, gentlemen, this is a work of sublime beauty, unique in the sum total of existing music, and the world will ever be grateful to you for making its recovery and performance possible."

His words fell in a complete and uneasy silence. None of the trustees knew what to make of his story. Kruger had not spoken a word during the entire meeting, but Felix had felt the dart of his eyes upon him. Finally the Mayor spoke. "Well," he declared in the tone of a judge summing up a puzzling case, "it's an interesting story, but personally I haven't yet made up my mind about it."

"I am ready to furnish whatever explanations might be required," said Felix, trying to control his impatience. "I should like to emphasize that a decision should be taken now, so that

PIERRE LA MURE

the preliminary task of copying the manuscript could begin at once. Time is pressing, if we want to perform this work in the spring."

The Mayor raised his hand. "We appreciate your enthusiasm, Herr Direktor, but the board cannot be expected to act hastily in such a matter. You've asked us to allocate special funds for the performance of this work. Have you any idea how much it will cost?"

"A great deal, I am afraid, Your Lordship. But considerable savings could be made if Pastor Hagen would lend us the four choirs of the Saint Thomas School. This would give us more than one hundred well-trained voices. There are also several choral societies in this city and the surrounding towns. No doubt they could be induced to join in the rehearsals. There would only remain the matter of soloists, which shouldn't prove too difficult or costly. Naturally, I shall volunteer my services for the training of the choirs and the necessary additional orchestra rehearsals."

"Well," said the Mayor, and his tone implied he had at last reached a decision, "the first step is to obtain Pastor Hagen's co-operation. I suggest you approach His Reverence and try to enlist his support. You'll then be in a position to draw a detailed estimate of cost. Meanwhile, we'll all do some thinking and I'm confident we'll reach a decision at our next week's meeting."

As he spoke the last words he pounded his gavel, and the meeting was over.

Pastor Hagen, by common consent the most powerful man in Leipzig, lived in the parsonage at the back of the church. That afternoon he was bent over his desk engrossed in the composition of the next day's sermon when Gottlieb, his manservant, appeared and informed him that Herr Doktor Mendelssohn was waiting outside.

A minute later Felix was ushered into the study.

"This is indeed a pleasant surprise!" the pastor exclaimed with that peculiar brand of beaming geniality churchmen and politicians reserve for people whose convictions do not coincide

BEYOND DESIRE

with their own. "I hope you and the lovely Frau Mendelssohn are enjoying the best of health," he went on, waving him to a dark red chair across the desk.

While sitting down and resting his top hat on his knees Felix assured him that the Mendelssohns were enjoying perfect health. He then expressed his gratitude for His Reverence's graciousness in receiving him at this late hour of the afternoon without a previous appointment.

"But I shall take as little as possible of Your Reverence's precious time," he said. "Two weeks ago I came across an old manuscript—"

"I've heard about it. In Martin Koehler's shop, wasn't it?"

Felix controlled his surprise and proceeded. "One of the things that makes this score of special interest to Your Reverence is that it was written more than a hundred years ago by a choirmaster of your own Saint Thomas School. It would be of invaluable help if Your Reverence would permit the four Saint Thomas choirs to participate in the performance of this remarkable work. Naturally, a reasonable fee would be paid."

Pastor Hagen joined the tips of his fingers before his lips and closed his eyes. For an instant he seemed to be lost in prayer. "What is the title of this composition?" he asked.

"The Passion of Our Lord, According to Saint Matthew."

"And I take it you're planning to conduct this performance yourself?" Abruptly the pastor opened his eyes. A vein in his forehead swelled. "Don't you see the impropriety for a man of another faith to conduct a performance of sacred music in a Lutheran church?"

This time Felix stared openly at the man across the desk. "But surely Your Reverence can see that it isn't a matter of religion, but of music."

"Sacred music. Sacred music is a province of the Church and I do not think it fit for a non-Christian to mingle in matters of the Church. This composition is a musical version of the New Testament"—his voice had risen to pulpit volume—"and the New Testament belongs to the Christians."

"If the New Testament belongs to Christians, then surely

PIERRE LA MURE

the Old belongs to us. How do you dare then to sing our David's Psalms? How do—"

"Sir, how dare you?" thundered the pastor.

Felix sprang to his feet and walked to the desk. He was trembling with anger. "You fool! . . ." he said slowly. "You poor, bigoted, misguided fool!"

Whirling around, he stalked out of the room.

When he arrived home still shaking from anger he told Cécile about his visit to the pastor and its disastrous end.

"You . . ." She looked at him aghast, almost incredulously. "You called His Reverence a fool?"

"Yes. I did." His voice was cold but his eyes pleaded for understanding, if not approval. "But don't you think I had a good reason?"

For an instant she looked at him as though she had never seen him before. Then the words came out in a breathless rush. "How could you? How could you do such a thing? How could you insult Pastor Hagen? It's you who are a fool." She spoke in cold fury, and each word struck him like a stone. "Yes, a fool! Only a fool would insult Pastor Hagen. I hope you're happy. You now have two enemies in this town, Herr Kruger and His Reverence. They'll never forgive you."

"I don't expect them to," he flung back with brutal irony. "Christians seldom do."

For an instant she glared at him, her lips trembling, unable to speak. "I don't know what's come over you," she said in a choked stammer. "Since that old music has entered this house you've been acting as if you were out of your mind. Do you want to ruin us, is that it?" She lifted her tear-drenched face to him. "Is that what you want to do? Ruin us all? Do you want us to be run out of this town?"

He looked down on her lovely face, now ugly with grief. His fists unclenched. Anger left him, leaving only an immense weariness that slackened his muscles and sagged his shoulders. She didn't understand, she never would . . .

"Please, leave me alone, Cécile," he said calmly, running his

BEYOND DESIRE

hands over his eyes. He walked to the window. "Please, leave me alone," he repeated, gazing out into the approaching night.

They spoke no more about it that evening. They tried to act naturally and with an effort talked of indifferent things. But now resentment hung between them like the smoke lingering after an explosion. Silence had acquired a new density, a new texture of bitterness. Their long-concealed misunderstanding had finally come out in the open, taken shape and form and sound.

Strangely, he fell asleep the moment his cheek touched the pillow. When he awoke he was not surprised to see that she had gone. Somehow he had expected it. Then he remembered it was Sunday. She had gone to church, taking the children with her.

To his surprise it was Gustav who brought him his breakfast. "You didn't drive the mistress to church this morning?"

"No, Master Felix. The mistress said she'd walk."

It was the tone of gloom in which these words were spoken that alerted Felix. "What's wrong?" he said sharply. "Are you ill?"

The old servant shook his head. "There's trouble, Master Felix. People are talking. They say you insulted His Reverence."

"Insulted him!" Felix laughed. "Why, it was he who—" He checked himself. What was the use? "You've known me long enough to know I wouldn't insult anyone, let alone His Reverence," he said lamely.

"Have my horse ready in an hour," he added. "And tell the mistress when she returns from church not to expect me at dinner."

It was good to be out of Leipzig, away from gossiping tongues. He turned into a grassy lane that forked out of the road, and soon Schmidt's farm came into view. It was a large establishment in a state of considerable disrepair.

Felix's entrance into the courtyard was signaled by fierce barking and the cackling of excited hens. A door opened in the

PIERRE LA MURE

main building and Gertrude Schmidt's moon face appeared in the doorway.

"Herr Direktor!" she cried, clapping her hands, as if gazing on some unearthly vision. "Hermann, come quick! The Herr Direktor's here."

Grasping her voluminous skirts with her two hands, she ran toward Felix, followed an instant later by her husband.

Under the buoyant kindness of these simple people Felix felt himself relaxing. His nerves grew quiet. For a while, sipping his beer from an old faïence mug, he talked with Hermann of unimportant things. Suddenly he found himself telling the old flute player about his visit to the pastor. "I know I shouldn't have called him a fool, but he made me so mad I lost control of myself."

Schmidt looked worried and thumbed the tobacco down the bowl of his pipe. "Bad business," he said at last, his eyebrows joined in a frown of concern. "That means trouble, Herr Direktor."

"I'm afraid so. Do you think—do you think if I went and apologized—?"

Hermann shook his head. "He wouldn't receive you. Forgive me, Herr Direktor, but this old music"—he hesitated—"is it worth all this trouble?"

This time it was Felix who was slow to reply. "I don't know any more . . . I think it is. In fact I am sure it is . . . but it seems to have brought me nothing but trouble. Even Frau Mendelssohn thinks I'm being ridiculous about it." Brusquely he turned to Hermann. His face tensed with sudden passion. "But let me tell you one thing, Hermann. I am not being ridiculous. This Passion is the greatest music ever written. I've studied the score, every note of it, and I know what I'm talking about. Somehow this music must be heard and I know that if I don't perform it, nobody will. It was the same with Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, remember? I tell you, Hermann, this is a colossal work. It's all humanity singing the death of Christ!" He stopped with the abruptness of people not given to long

BEYOND DESIRE

speeches. The exaltation went out of his eyes. His shoulders sagged and he let out a muffled snort. "And I can't even get the Saint Thomas choir! All I've accomplished is making an enemy of the pastor."

"Would you like to hear some of this music?" Hermann asked with studied casualness. "If you let me have a section of the score, I'll have the members of the Cecilia Vocal Society sing it for you. I am the president."

"You—you are president of a choral society and you never told me anything about it?"

"Well, you see, Herr Direktor, it isn't much of a society and I was afraid you'd make fun of me. I am the only professional musician in the whole lot."

"You don't have to apologize. I think it's wonderful. And where do you hold rehearsals?"

"In Frank Tanzen's shed. He's a wheelwright and his shop is near the Grimma Gate. He is one of our members. Perhaps—" He hesitated. "Perhaps you'd like to come some evening and hear us sing. It'd be a great honor."

"I'd like to very much."

A little taken aback by Felix's ready acceptance, Hermann felt that some additional warning was necessary. "As I say, they're only working people and they sing just for fun. It won't be anything like the Dresden opera, but it'll be something."

The house in Lungerstein Gardens seemed cold, almost hostile, after the warm hospitality of the Schmidt farm. Cécile said little, but her pressed lips and uneasy glances betrayed her anxiety and discontent. An awkward attempt on his part to justify his conduct merely brought out a curt reply. "I'd rather not speak about it."

Outside the air itself seemed to have changed. In the streets people averted their eyes to avoid returning his salute. From Gustav he learned that Pastor Hagen had delivered an eloquent sermon full of allusions to "the arrogant fools who, under pretext of art, dared to meddle in God's affairs."

PIERRE LA MURE

Felix went about his business and said nothing. He found relief in work. The long rehearsals with the Gewandhaus Orchestra did not seem long any more. Even his teaching at the Conservatorium became a welcome diversion, a brief escape from the surrounding hostility.

The evenings at home were the most trying part of the day. Dinners had become strained encounters in which formal courtesy had replaced tenderness. Cécile spoke about the weather, the children. After dinner she excused herself and under some pretext repaired to her room, while he sat in his study by the fire, sipping cognac, wrestling with his thoughts.

In this matter of the *Passion*, for instance, he had no right to ask her to renounce her social standing, incur the ostracism of her friends to join him in some ridiculous and probably unsuccessful crusade over a bundle of yellowed music paper. On the other hand, this music had come into his hands and he couldn't, he had no right to let it disappear again. And there it was in a nutshell. A dilemma, very simple and unbreakable. How would it all end? He didn't know. He knew only that his inner turmoil had one clear result. His headaches became more frequent.

The day before the meeting of the board of trustees Felix received the visit of an extraordinarily thin, stoop-shouldered man. "My name is Jakob Meyer Howlitz," the visitor began. "I am a banker by profession. Although I have not attempted to establish social relations with you and Frau Mendelssohn, I had the privilege of knowing your father and for years I've attended your Gewandhaus concerts. I've come on an unpleasant errand," he proceeded. "One of which I do not approve, but which was thrust upon me by the members of Leipzig's Jewish community. In their name I beg you to desist from any further attempt to perform Johann Sebastian Bach's *Passion*."

A flush of anger swept through Felix. "You seem to be extraordinarily well informed of my plans," he said. "And why, may I ask, should the Jewish community of Leipzig presume to dictate to me what music I should or should not perform?"

BEYOND DESIRE

"Those who have sent me do not wish to dictate to you in any way. They merely want to avoid trouble. Due to a set of unfortunate circumstances, it has become a political and religious issue, and could easily turn into a political and religious conflict. In his Sunday sermon, Pastor Hagen made clear that he would regard your presentation of this sacred Christian music as an offensive gesture and an unwarranted interference in religious matters. And also because of Herr Kruger's personal enmity toward you."

Felix frowned irascibly at the visitor. "What has Herr Kruger to do with it?"

The banker's face remained expressionless but a light of warning came into his eyes. "Herr Kruger has been waiting for an opportunity to arouse anti-Semitism in this town and you may provide him with just such an opportunity. We want peace, Herr Mendelssohn. We've earned it and would like to keep it. It would indeed be a cruel irony if one of our race, the grandson of Moses Mendelssohn, was the cause of new strife and persecution."

"I appreciate your remarks," said Felix, "but this question of the Passion has been twisted and confused beyond all recognition. Let me state clearly once and for all my point of view. Some magnificent and forgotten old music has come into my hands, and I feel it should be performed. I, as a man born in the Jewish faith, have as much right to perform this music as a Catholic to gaze upon the Teheran Mosque or a Calvinist to admire the Chartres Cathedral. Beauty transcends religion. It is the only field on which all humanity meets in concord and brotherliness. On the grimy pages of this bundle of old paper lies the greatest music ever written by man. It rightfully belongs to the world's musical patrimony. It is my duty to try to make it heard, for I know that, once brought to life, it will be heard as long as there is music on this earth."

Laboriously, with the help of his cane, Herr Howlitz struggled to his feet. "I shall report your words, Herr Mendelssohn."

Felix lingered an instant in his chair, then got up. "I regret

PIERRE LA MURE

to disappoint your friends and I hope they will understand my reasons." Then, with sudden sympathy for this reserved gentleman who reminded him of his father, he said, "I know you will."

The banker took a few steps toward the desk. He looked directly into Felix's eyes as a smile came to his face. "Your father would have been proud of you, Herr Mendelssohn." With old-fashioned courtliness he bowed, pronounced the ritual, "Your servant, sir," and shuffled out of the room.

Felix could not sleep that night. All right, he would go over the whole damned business once again for the last time . . . He would reach a decision and that would be the end of it. One thing was sure, it couldn't go on like this. All right, the Passion was magnificent music and it should be performed. Well, he had tried, hadn't he? He had done all he could, hadn't he? . . . Was it his fault if the pastor was a bigoted fool? If the trustees were clods of beer-sodden fat incapable of any vision, any generosity? Was it his fault Kruger was a half-crazy fanatic who dreamed of ruling Leipzig? If Muller was a shifty politician without honor or principles?

And now there was this Howlitz man with his story about the Leipzig Jews. They would also turn against him. For God's sake, wasn't there anyone on *his* side? Anyone who understood anything? . . . No, there wasn't. Not even his wife. What was he supposed to do? Challenge everybody? Was he the only one right and everybody wrong? . . . Well, he'd had enough of this nonsense! Someone else could present the Passion if he wanted, but not he . . . He'd had enough, he washed his hands of the whole thing. He was through.

He walked to the window and stood there gazing out. Across the public park the Saint Thomas School stood, huge and square. In the stillness of the house the clock struck four. Over the roofs a mauve grayness had come into the sky, announcing the coming of dawn.

Dawn—the hour of treason . . . He stood at the window,

BEYOND DESIRE

white-faced and afraid, as if he expected to hear the distant crowing of a rooster . . .

The chairman rapped his gavel on the table and announced the meeting open. "As you know," he began in a brisk business-like tone, "we are here to discuss our distinguished Herr Direktor's suggestion that a certain work of ancient music, recently discovered, be performed this season. However, before we enter into the discussion of the merits of this proposition, I feel that, as chairman of the board, it is my duty to—"

Felix scarcely heard the Mayor's words. His eyes felt hot and gritty from lack of sleep. Through drooping lids he studied the eleven men at the table. Kruger had come well armed and fingered a sheaf of notes, ready to spring into action, already savoring his revenge. The others sat stiffly in their highbacked chairs.

"And now," concluded the Mayor, "I shall give the floor to the Honorable Trustee, Herr Kruger, who will tell us his views on the question."

Kruger cleared his throat, but already Felix was speaking. "It won't be necessary, Your Lordship," he said in a flat, tired voice. "I've reached the conclusion that a performance of the Passion would impose an intolerable financial burden on the board. Therefore I withdraw my request that this work be performed and apologize to the board for wasting their valuable time."

Slowly his eyes traveled around the table. He had spoken, the deed was done. He would not perform the Passion. Johann Sebastian Bach could resume his sleep of oblivion . . .

The sound of his own voice startled him. "I hereby tender my resignation as conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra and director of the Conservatorium, effective as of the end of the current season, May fifteenth."

He hadn't meant to say that. It had come out of itself, like a breath. What would Cécile say? . . . Well, she would say what she liked. He didn't care. Didn't care about anything.

PIERRE LA MURE

"You mean you're resigning?" said Muller. His apoplectic face was flushed scarlet.

Felix nodded. "At the end of this season, Your Lordship. You may start looking for my successor."

They were speechless. Leipzig without Mendelssohn! Why, it was inconceivable . . . It was he who had made the city famous, envied by every other German town. And now he was going . . .

"If it's a question of salary," ventured one trustee.

"Yes," chimed in another, "if you've received a more attractive offer I am sure that the board—"

Felix stopped him with a gesture of his hand. "It isn't a question of money."

"Then what is it?" asked Muller almost aggressively.

"Let's say that I am tired," said Felix, getting up. "And now if you'll excuse me, I'd like to return to my office. I have work to do."

He gave a nod and went out of the room. A moment later he entered his office, walked directly to the small round table by the fireplace and filled himself a glass of port. He drank, then sat down at his desk, holding his throbbing head between his hands.

Then quietly—he wept.

He should have gone down fighting. He should have shouted, pounded his fist on the table, fired every argument he had—for he, too, had arguments. He should have threatened to go to Dresden and speak to the King. He should have told them he would write to every newspaper in the country and start a press campaign against them. There were a thousand things he could have done. After all he had prestige, power, money.

Instead he had done nothing. He had conceded defeat without a fight, like a coward. He had strangled his conscience for their benefit and now he would have to live without it, spend the rest of his life with the memory of his betrayal.

Why? Why had he done such a thing? Because—because he

BEYOND DESIRE

was tired of gossip, incomprehension, misunderstanding and plain stupidity. Because he didn't want to engage in a polemic with the pastor and the whole Lutheran Church, because he didn't want to bring new trouble to the Jews of Leipzig, because he didn't want to start an open war with the trustees, the Mayor and Kruger. But above all he didn't want to drag Cécile into a fight with which she had no sympathy. That was the real reason. He couldn't brave the storm alone, face the fight without Cécile. He couldn't endure her tight lips, her nagging silences, her long-suffering glances. He was in pain, his headaches were growing worse, he didn't have very long to live. He wanted peace, at least peace at home. And he had bought it—at the price of his conscience. That was all.

He heard a sound of rushing footsteps in the corridor. Swiftly he snatched his quill from the elaborate brass inkstand and pretended to be writing a letter when there was a knock on the door and the Mayor walked in.

"I am sorry," he began plumping himself down on a chair. "I know how much this old music means to you and how much it must have cost you to give it up. I wish I could have helped you, but I couldn't. My hands are tied. I can hold my own against Kruger, but I can't have both him and the pastor against me."

"I understand," nodded Felix wearily. "Anyway, it's all over now. Let's not speak any more about it."

"What I came to tell you is that after you went out, we discussed the matter of your resignation and the board has decided not to accept it."

"Not accept it?" snapped Felix. "I don't care whether they accept it or not, I—"

"Now, now don't get excited." The Mayor sketched a placating gesture. "Of course we can't hold you if you want to go. But I suggested that no mention of your resignation be inserted in the minutes of the meetings, so that you may have a chance to reconsider your decision." He paused an instant and considered Felix thoughtfully. "You don't look well," he said quietly. "This business has got your nerves in tatters. I'm used to gossip and

PIERRE LA MURE

arguments and people whispering behind your back, but you aren't. Why don't you take two weeks off and go to Dresden? You know how we've been screaming for the last twenty years for an opera season in Leipzig—well, go and see what our chances are, if any, of having one . . . Believe me, Felix, it would be a good thing all around. It'd get you back on your feet and it'd give people here time to forget. On your return everything would be as it was before this confounded Passion affair."

With a groan he hoisted himself up out of the chair.

"I'll think about it," said Felix, rising. "Thank you, Christoph."

After the Mayor's departure Felix stood at the window, idly gazing at the billowing gray clouds hanging low over the roofs. It was going to rain again. Another forlorn drizzly evening.

Suddenly he was aware of a presence in the room. Turning around he saw Hermann Schmidt standing a few feet away. "I knocked twice," said the flute player, "but you didn't hear me. I just wanted to know if you needed anything before I go home."

"No. Thank you, Hermann."

"How—how did it go at the meeting?"

"Splendidly." A brittle bitterness crept into his voice. "We were all in perfect accord that the Passion should not be performed."

Schmidt's bushy eyebrows bobbed up in startled dismay. "You didn't fight for it?"

"My dear Hermann, there is no sense in starting a fight that's already lost, is there? One has to be reasonable in this world. By the way I think I'll take two weeks off and go to Dresden. The board wants me to see if I could arrange an opera season for Leipzig next year."

"It'll do you good, Herr Direktor, to get away for a while. You need a change and you'll enjoy yourself there. I understand they're having that great Italian singer, Maria—" He groped for the name. "Maria Salla, that's it. Never heard her myself but they say she's wonderful."

BEYOND DESIRE

In the dimness of the room he did not see Felix's face turn white.

Cécile looked up from the letter she was writing to her mother. "You came early, didn't you?" It was not a reproach, merely a statement uttered without pleasure. Dutifully she offered her cheek, and he leaned down to kiss it. "Is it still raining?"

"Yes, it's still raining," he said, sitting down on the ottoman near her desk. "Don't you know it is always raining in Leipzig?"

How little it took to change a mood. A few words, an intonation, a gesture. Despite himself irony pierced his voice. "And how's dear *Maman*? Well, I hope."

"Very well. You'd better go and change your clothes. The Dossenbachs are coming to dinner."

"They are?"

She frowned with annoyance. "I told you. Don't you remember?"

"I don't. It doesn't matter. By the way," he said, walking to the door, "you'll be glad to learn that I've given up my notion of performing the Passion."

She had returned to her letter and she quickly glanced over her shoulder. "I am glad you came to your senses."

His jaws clenched, and he felt the hair rise at the back of his neck but he said nothing and went out, softly closing the door behind him.

The Dossenbachs arrived on time. Hosts and guests promptly repaired to the drawing room, where the customary amenities were exchanged. Felix sipped schnapps and took little part in these effusions. Occasionally he nodded in assent or let out a grunt of approval, knowing from experience that nothing more was expected of him. When Gustav announced that dinner was ready they trooped into the dining room. Felix picked at his food and drank glass after glass of wine. By the time the third course had been served the wine was doing its work. His ears hummed. The table wavered and the flames at the tips of the candles waved in a windless storm. All of a sudden, with the brutality of a rock crashing through a window, a thought ex-

PIERRE LA MURE

ploded in his mind. He must get away from Leipzig. If he didn't break loose now he'd never pull himself out of this quagmire of bourgeois futility. He must leave this bigoted, venomous town. This overfurnished, carpeted, curtained prison he called home. This pretty woman who had ceased to love him and endured his presence in the name of Christian charity and because of her marital vows. How stupid of him not to see it sooner! She was tired of him, had been for many years. With a sigh of relief she would welcome his departure, the prospect of a separation.

His gaze went back to the chancellor. This time with acute distaste. Dossenbach was talking, rolling the words on his tongue. "Should His Majesty ever deign to place me in a post of high responsibility, I shall stand on my principles. For what is a man without principles? . . . Come what may, I shall do my duty."

Angrily Felix echoed the words in his mind. His hand shook as he refilled his glass. Old fool! Listen to him after a lifetime of compromise and shady deals . . . Abruptly, almost unknowingly, he cut the professor short and began to speak.

"Of course, you'll do your duty. You'll do it until it proves inconvenient or unwise or merely unprofitable. You see, my poor Dossenbach, you are no more a man of principles, a man of duty than I am. You'll betray your conscience at the first chance, as I have betrayed mine. So stop prattling about duty and things that don't belong to us, and let's have another drink."

He raised his glass but the chancellor never joined him in that drink. Already he was on his feet, sputtering, purple with rage, tossing his crumpled napkin on the table while his wife was fleeing the room as if it were on fire, with Cécile at her heels pleading incoherently, tears running down her cheeks.

But there were no tears in her eyes when she returned to the dining room a moment later. "How could you?" she said with ominous slowness. "How could you?" she repeated, standing across the table like a trembling statue.

"Could I what?" He drained his glass, clucked his tongue. "I told the truth, didn't I?"

BEYOND DESIRE

"You're drunk." She spat the word at him.

"What if I am? But not from wine. From ten years of loneliness and disappointment." He slammed his fist on the table.

After that they no longer answered each other but shouted at the same time across the table, hurling their pent-up grievances. They fought as only people who have loved can fight, without coherence or sportsmanship, aiming their verbal blows with the deadly accuracy of long familiarity. She had endured his moods, his mockery, his extravagance. She had been a good wife, given him a good home, good children.

"But you're destroying everything!" she shrieked. "Everything!"

"And you, you're destroying me!" he shouted back.

"How can you say that?" she flung back. "I've loved you with all my heart."

For a tremulous instant he wanted to lift her in his arms, carry her upstairs as in the happy Düsseldorf days. Ten years of misunderstanding held him back. "There's nothing more to say." His voice was cold, his eyes hard. "We don't understand each other and never will. Go back to your dear wonderful *Maman*. She'll be delighted to have you back and will tell you what a brute I am and how glad you are to be rid of me."

"So this is the end?"

He was about to say yes but the word wouldn't pass his lips. "Time will tell," he said in a toneless voice. "I'm going to Dresden for a few weeks. Then we'll see."

Quietly he walked to the study and stood at the window for a moment. It was raining. It always was raining in Leipzig . . . Well, it was over. It didn't take long to break a life—two lives . . . He was alone now. Only Karl remained. Dear old Karl in London. He would understand . . .

He sat down at his desk, took his quill and began to write:

"My dear friend,

"For two years I was as happy as a man can be, but for a long time now I've been miserable . . ."

VI

In the pallid afternoon sunshine Dresden had the frail baroque charm of the porcelain knickknacks for which it was famous. Upon his arrival Felix drove to his hotel on Theater Platz and was welcomed by the manager, who insisted on calling him "Your Excellency" and conducting him personally to his suite.

During the train journey from Leipzig he had made up his mind about Maria. He wouldn't try to see her. Nothing, he had decided, could be gained from such an encounter. On this point he was very definite. The past was past and better left alone . . . He would dispatch his business as speedily as possible, send his report to the board, along with his resignation, and leave for Berlin.

An hour later, dressed in fresh linen and neatly pressed business suit, he called on the director of the Dresden opera, whose office was located in the nearby opera house.

Herr von Wierling received him at once and with genuine cordiality. "And so Leipzig wants its little opera season," he chuckled after Felix told him of the board's operatic aspirations. "I've often marveled at the strange and fatal attraction opera seems to have for laymen and musicians alike. It's all the more remarkable since the financial outcome is mathematically certain. It always loses money. But if they are determined to go ahead, I'll be delighted to help them. Come back in three or four days and I'll have something for you."

He opened the door and bowed courteously. "Your servant."

"Your servant," said Felix, returning the bow.

A few minutes later he was struck by the thought he had nowhere to go and nothing to do. The whole evening—his first evening of freedom—gaped before him, empty. In the past he had sometimes longed for an evening of complete freedom, a breathing spell from his crowded schedule. Well, his wish had come true.

BEYOND DESIRE

For a long time he loitered along Seidnitzerstrasse, stopping in front of shop windows and gazing at the displays. Unexpectedly he found himself before a restaurant. He entered, sat down at a corner table at the end of the room. Leisurely he ordered dinner, studying the wine card with care.

The trouble with wine was that it relaxed your self-control. It loosened all sorts of ideas in your mind, ideas you didn't care to entertain. Cécile, for instance. Now if there was one person in the world he didn't want to think about it was Cécile.

He felt a sob rise to his throat, gulped down his cognac and called for the check. He paid, tossed an extravagant tip to the waiter and went out into the street.

The night had turned cold and he shivered in his cape. He thought of returning to his hotel, but he knew he wouldn't sleep. For a while he shambled aimlessly through the narrow ill-lighted streets. Suddenly the realization that Maria was in Dresden, only a few hundred yards from him, struck with such devastating intensity that he stopped in the middle of a deserted street, listening to the pounding of his heart. She was here. He could see her. Not talk to her, of course. Just see her. He'd probably never see her again in his life. Surely there was no harm in glancing at her.

Already he was tormented with the thought that it might be too late, that she might have left the theatre. Almost running, he went back to the Theater Platz. The performance was over, but people were still coming out of the theatre. The last carriages were rumbling away. She couldn't have left yet. Cautiously he walked around the building. People were waiting in a short alley leading to the stage entrance. He joined them, keeping himself in the background.

The door remained shut for a long time. Then, abruptly it opened—and he saw her.

She was dressed all in white—some frothy material he could not identify. She passed only a few feet away from him and he saw her face distinctly. She hadn't changed. He heard her voice as she spoke a few words to her escort and he caught a glimpse

PIERRE LA MURE

of her clear eyes. With pounding heart he watched her disappear into a closed carriage.

He wandered at random through the deserted town. He felt cold and bitter. Now he was sorry he had seen her. He berated himself. Of course, she had a lover. What did he expect? He told himself he didn't care and found a mournful relief in reviling her in his mind. She was nothing but a slut who happened to have a beautiful voice. That's all. She was incapable of love. She was greedy.

He heard a clock strike three as he reached his hotel. The night clerk came rushing to let him in.

"Good evening, Your Excellency," said the man with a bow.

"Good evening."

With heavy steps he started climbing the stairs. On the second-floor landing he turned into the long red-carpeted corridor. As he was approaching his suite he noticed a slit of yellow light under the door. He quickened his steps and entered.

Maria was in the room.

They did not speak, didn't even smile. Blindly they rushed at each other, and there was nothing but the hunger of their lips, the clenching of their fingers, the gasps of their mingling breaths.

Time receded from them. Once again he was young, his hair black, his face unlined, and once again their love was new. That night, in the candle-lit silence of that Dresden hotel room, the madness of youthful desire was upon them once more.

Maria had a suite in the same hotel. She had learned of Felix's arrival from the chambermaid. At once her plan had been made. Simple and effective. She had bribed the maid into giving her the key to his room. After the theatre she had let herself in and waited.

Somehow everything seemed crystal-clear. The past had been explored and dismissed. The years of separation had vanished, never had been. There remained only the future.

BEYOND DESIRE

The strongest deterrent to many illicit love affairs is the difficulty of keeping them secret. Between two well-known people this difficulty becomes well-nigh insurmountable. Maria now proposed the almost impossible task of hiding her relationship with Felix. The challenge, as she saw it, consisted in spending together every possible moment they could steal from their respective obligations but in such a furtive and clever way that no one in the entire city of Dresden might entertain the faintest suspicion. In Paris, she promised, they would go out together. "But not here," she said with finality.

Felix sensed that in some obscure way she was protecting his prestige, and even more that of Cécile. He argued that Cécile didn't love him, didn't care what he did. But this had no effect. "Maybe," she said with a stubborn shake of her head. "But she is your wife just the same, no? The *mamma* of the *bambini*, sì?"

Since much of her time was taken by fittings and rehearsals, he spent most of his days alone. He attempted to arrange some sort of life for himself at the hotel and found it extremely difficult. He would, he told himself, write music while waiting for Maria. Work would make time pass and keep him away from his thoughts. Eagerly he sat down at his desk, quill in hand. But he missed the steeple of Saint Thomas in the window, the peals of children's laughter drifting down from the nursery. The memory of the Passion, lying in a drawer of his music cabinet, returned to him with unexpected impact. As the end of Maria's engagement at the opera house approached, her moods became unpredictable. Like a dog biting its chain, she tried to break the bond that tied her to him. She would beg him to return to his wife, only to rush into his arms and with gasping sobs make him swear never to go away. She quarreled with him for no reason. She shouted at him that she didn't love him, never had. At other times she would cuddle in his arms and dream aloud. "Maybe I do not sing the opera any more and we go to Taormina. They say the sky is always blue in

PIERRE LA MURE

Taormina . . .” Once when he was suffering from one of his headaches she knelt by his side with tears in her eyes, and for the first time in a long while he saw her cross herself and pray to her little colored plaster statue of the Madonna which she had brought down to his room.

And now it was mid afternoon and he was lounging on the red plush chaise longue, reading a letter from Christoph Muller that had arrived that morning.

His Lordship wrote that the board of trustees had approved a motion of thanks (his own, incidentally) for his brilliant report on the operatic question. The vote had been unanimous, even Kruger joining in it. Which meant that whatever animosities had arisen in the past had now vanished. Pastor Hagen had similarly abstained from any more personal allusions in his sermons. In short, the tempest in a teapot had calmed down. The unpleasant Passion incident was forgotten, and on his return Felix would find nothing but friendly smiles and open arms. The Mayor ended on a personal note, saying that he for one was anxious that Felix would decide to come back before long, as he missed his good friend.

Felix rested the letter in his lap and gazed unseeingly at Maria's little statue of the Virgin. The Mayor's message had awakened memories, stirred old feelings. He hadn't thought much about Leipzig since his arrival in Dresden. Now it was coming back in a procession of little tableaux, familiar daily scenes of his prosaic, well-regulated life. His classes at the Conservatorium, the orchestra rehearsals in Gewandhaus Hall, Hermann Schmidt puffing on his flute, the board meetings, the leisurely walks back to the house in the late afternoon, Gustav opening the door and taking his hat and cape, the visits to the nursery with the children running to him, tugging at his coat, telling him the breathless events of the day . . .

And Cécile . . . Her exquisite face, the golden sheen of her hair, her calm eyes that could be like two windows opening on a blue cloudless sky. The quiet evenings in the study with her on the green sofa knitting, sewing—always busy. The perfect

BEYOND DESIRE

wife, the perfect lady, the perfect hostess at dull gatherings, the vice-president of the Leipzig Ladies' Charitable Society for Succor to the Poor . . .

Yes, it had been a peaceful life, happy in many ways. Why then didn't he want to return to it? Because—because it had become a meaningless routine, a sequence of acts, gestures and words culminating in a total of nothingness. That was why he clung to Maria. . . . Of course she was foolish, irresponsible, but at least she loved him. And he needed someone to love him, for love brought pain and joy and anger and delight—and it kept you from thinking . . .

He was jolted out of his reverie by a loud and insistent pounding on the door.

Karl Klingemann stood on the threshold, legs apart, looking formidable in his ruffled beaver and traveling cloak. "Don't ask any questions," he said before Felix could utter a word. "I am too hungry to argue. Get into your coat and come with me."

A moment later they were sitting at a secluded table in Dresden's most fashionable restaurant, deserted at this late hour. The diplomat had opposed a stony silence to Felix's inquiries, speaking only to the waiter to order a copious and discriminating lunch. It wasn't until he had disposed of the third course that he appeared to become aware of his friend's presence across the table.

"Friendship," he began with smouldering resentment, "has all the drawbacks of love and none of its rewards. If I had another friend like you I'd shoot myself. All the way down from London I've been cursing the day when our paths met."

"Well," said Felix with false cheeriness, "now that you've got that off your chest you may go back. Or have you come all this way to deliver a sermon? Believe me, it would be quite useless."

"Quite right," nodded Karl. "I have no faith in sermons. No, I merely came here to judge for myself whether or not you've gone crazy. Before leaving Leipzig, you wrote me, if

PIERRE LA MURE

you remember, a long and despondent letter which worried me enormously. In it you mentioned your intention of separating from Cécile. At once I asked for a leave of absence."

In Leipzig a pale and forlorn Gustav had informed him that Felix had left for Dresden and Cécile for Frankfurt. "So I took the first train and drove straight to the Hanoverian Embassy. My good friend Baron von Stulenheim provided me with your address. Like all diplomatic chiefs he receives daily police reports on important arrivals."

"Well," said Felix with challenging irony, "now that you've found me and learned everything, what are you going to do about it?"

"It depends," said Karl noncommittally. "I'd prefer that you tell me what you're going to do."

"I expect to leave with Maria for Paris in a few days. She has an engagement there." For the first time the two friends were facing each other with open hostility, preparing for the clash. "Anything else you'd like to know? Or will you flash your card and make me confess?"

Karl ignored the jibe. "And what will you do after her Paris engagement?"

"I don't exactly know. She mentioned another engagement in Vienna."

"And then?" Karl's voice trembled with anger. "Another one in Milano. Or Berlin, or London, or St. Petersburg . . . And everywhere she goes you'll go. You'll roam through Europe in drafty coaches, keep her company, attend to the luggage and the details of traveling. A sort of secretary-lady's companion-manager-lover all rolled into one. In every city you'll receive the invitations and flowers that her former lovers will send and hear the gossip about her previous affairs. During rehearsals you'll wait patiently in her dressing room or at the hotel and you will attend every performance—from the wings, of course—until you've heard *Il Barbiere*, *Lucia* and *Norma* two hundred times and can't stand a single bar of them. And for that you, you, Moses Mendelssohn's grandson and a great musician in your right, will abandon wife and children!"

BEYOND DESIRE

He stopped abruptly.

"You fool!" he blurted out. "Can you see yourself leading this sort of life? Don't you see you'd be a hundred times more miserable than you ever were in Leipzig?"

Felix was startled by the violence of his friend's outburst. Never had he seen Karl angry. And he was telling the truth . . . Felix knew it, and that was the worst of it, for truth was the last thing he wanted to hear.

Suddenly there was nothing in him but anger, a black, sputtering resentment against the man before him, this former friend who was too blunt, too clear-sighted. "Why don't you go back to London?" he flung, pushing back his chair and springing to his feet. "Who gave you the right to meddle in my affairs?"

"Our friendship!" Karl slammed his heavy fist on the table. "I am not going to let you wreck your life."

Felix's reply was a cruel, derisive laugh. "You can bang your fist and shout all you want. I'm leaving with Maria and there's nothing you or anyone else can do about it. I don't ever want to see you again."

With unbelieving eyes the diplomat watched his childhood friend stride out of the restaurant. He saw him stand in the rain, scanning the empty street for a carriage, then with a hunching of shoulders plunge ahead and out of sight. He felt his throat tighten and for an instant he longed to run after him, plead with him and make him see reason. But Felix, he knew, was past reasoning. It would do no good.

Felix did not mention Karl's visit to Maria. They talked about their departure and decided they would leave early in the morning after her farewell performance.

He felt tired, vaguely angry, despondent and lost. His rupture with Karl filled him with remorse. He had lost his friend, severed the last mooring to the past. Now his life assumed a quality of nebulous aimlessness. Perhaps he was a fool to go with Maria, perhaps their life together would be a wandering hell, as Karl had said. Perhaps . . . perhaps . . . He no

PIERRE LA MURE

longer knew how he felt or what he wanted. He was tired of thinking, trying to peer into the troubled mirror of the future.

On the day of Maria's farewell performance it started snowing in the afternoon. By evening the streets were white.

Maria was singing the part of Rosina in *Il Barbiere*, and never had she sung as she did tonight. Each one of her arias sent the spectators into galvanic transports with the King himself, resplendent in gala uniform, giving the signal of applause. The performance over, a breath of madness seemed to rock the old opera house and the ovation soared to a paroxysm of enthusiasm. Abruptly the stately glittering audience turned into a shouting, stomping, unmanageable mob. In the red plush royal box, His Majesty stood, calling her name, clapping his hands.

With beating heart Felix watched Maria return before the lowered curtain, her arms laden with flowers. She dropped a bowing curtsy to the King, blew kisses to her admirers. Tirelessly the public clamored for her presence.

"Isn't she wonderful?" exclaimed Herr von Wierling. "You must come with us to her dressing room. I've ordered champagne to be served. Tomorrow, when she's gone and taken all our money with her, I'll cry over my ledgers, but tonight I don't want to think. Let's go and enjoy ourselves."

Politely Felix declined the invitation. Pleading a sudden headache, he took his leave.

In the pale candlelight his hotel room seemed very dim and silent after the brightness and hubbub of a moment ago. He sat down on the bed, his elbows on his knees, listening to the sound of applause lingering in his ears. Yes, it had been a triumph. She was indeed a great artist . . . It would be hours before she could join him. By now her dressing room must be crowded with ruffle-shirted gentlemen in evening clothes, officers in dashing uniforms, ladies in silk dresses and pearl necklaces. His Majesty would probably be there, toasting her health in champagne.

And he—he was here in this gloomy hotel room waiting

BEYOND DESIRE

for her. Perhaps that's what his new life would be. Waiting, always waiting. Other opera houses, other farewell performances, other dressing-room receptions. And he, somewhere in the background, waiting . . .

His lids felt heavy. An irresistible lassitude was blurring his thoughts, engulfing his mind. Unconsciously he stretched out on the bed and fell asleep.

He awoke with a start as if a bell were ringing in his ears. A sudden chilling fear clutched his heart. In its porcelain holder the candle had guttered down into a lumpy stub. It was late, very late, and Maria wasn't here . . .

In a flash he was upstairs, knocking on her door. Gently at first, then louder, angrily rattling the knob and calling her name. No answer came and he ran down to the lobby.

"Where is she?" he shouted, shaking the night clerk out of his doze. "Where's the *signorina*?" The man blinked dazedly. "Damn you, where is she?"

At last the clerk came to life. "Your Excellency—the *signorina*? . . . She's gone." He spoke as if everyone knew that except the haggard, wild-eyed man before him.

Felix didn't wait for details. He raced through the lobby, pushed open the bolts and ran into the snowy night. Across Theater Platz the opera house, spangled with lights a few hours ago, now stood black and lifeless like a charred ruin. His heart tolled in his chest as he groped his way toward the stage entrance. It, too, was dark and locked.

"Maria! . . . Maria! . . ." he called, pounding on the door with his fists. The name dissolved in the darkness, melted into the texture of the night.

For a long time he hammered on the door, shouting her name. At last he gave up, walked back to the hotel. Like some dazed automaton, he crossed the lobby again, climbed to his room and flung himself on the bed. His anger had exhausted itself. He felt too numb, too spent to grieve or even to focus his thoughts. She was gone . . .

PIERRE LA MURE

"She's gone," he said aloud to himself. His voice was calm, impersonal, with only a faint undertone of incredulity. "She is gone . . ."

How simple and final it sounded. Simple and final as death . . .

He sank into exhausted sleep.

It was late afternoon when he awoke again, and this time the pain did set in with lancing acuteness. His eyes fell on the small statue of the Virgin. Gently he took it in his trembling hands. How much it must have cost her to leave this behind . . . It meant so much to her. It was her talisman, the confidant of her most secret thoughts. She kissed it before every performance. She had gone, without a word, leaving the pious figure as a token of her love. But had it really been love?

At last he dared face thoughts he had desperately avoided. Yes, it had been love. A certain kind of love . . . Burning, exhausting and in the end destructive. Only real love could stand the acid test of time, and they had only spent, all told, a few weeks. What turmoils, what conflicts in these few weeks! No, it wouldn't have lasted. It couldn't have lasted. They had merely desired each other and like numberless lovers before them, they had lied to themselves and called their desire love . . . But beyond desire there was another love. A love that was not only of the flesh but of the mind, heart and soul. Beyond desire, like a sun behind a veil of clouds, shone the true, everlasting love that fused two human beings into one not only for this life but for eternity . . .

Suddenly he was thinking of a Cécile he had almost forgotten. The Frankfurt maiden, the apprentice *Hausfrau* who diligently poked her finger into the cakes of cheese . . . The young bride who had brought him a pure heart and a pure body . . . The wife who had sat with his head on her lap in the Swiss meadow and heard the mysterious call to Leipzig . . .

A short time later Felix sat down at the desk and began to write.

BEYOND DESIRE

My dearest,

With shame and despair I come to tell you how much I love and need and long for you. I've done wrong. I beg you to forgive me—

Page after page he unburdened his heart, telling her his doubts, his longings, his regrets. All the things he had so often wanted to tell her and hadn't.

Today I am like a man waking up from a bad dream. I can't believe the things I've done, the words I've said. I don't know whether or not you will forgive me. If you don't, I shan't complain. I shall walk alone to the end of my journey. But one thing I shall do. I shall return to Leipzig and try again—

He stopped, startled by a rush of footsteps in the room. He turned around and saw Cécile in her traveling clothes, running to him.

"Please, Felix, forgive me . . . I didn't know, didn't understand."

For a while she couldn't say more and clutched him, sobbing in his arms like a child.

He tried to lift her face, ask her to forgive him, but she wouldn't listen and went on, her face pressed against his chest. "No, it wasn't you, it was me . . . It took our separation to make me see it. And also that I can't live without you . . . You'll see, darling, I'll be a good wife, the kind of wife you need. We'll never part again. Wherever you want to go we'll go, whatever you want to do we'll do together . . . This time, darling, it's really for better or worse. This time it's forever . . ."

VII

It was a bright, snapping cold Sunday afternoon. They sat quietly on the green baize sofa, side by side. She, sewing, her face in repose; he, in his smoking jacket, looking alternately at her and at the fire, still doubting the wonder of being at home and with her.

"Do you realize we've been back four days already?" he said, breaking the silence.

She nodded without glancing at him, and after a pause, he went on, "I wish the children were here. I miss them."

"We'll get them as soon as this thing is over," she said, going on with her work. "They're better off there."

"And so perhaps would you be," he said, his voice low and apprehensive. "Are you absolutely sure, darling, you want to come with me into this brawl? It's going to be a long, hard fight, and there's no telling how it will end."

"But this time you have me." She bit her thread. "You're strong when you're two."

"And what if we fall flat on our faces?"

Placidly she threaded her needle. "We'll pick ourselves up and try somewhere else. Berlin, perhaps."

He shook his head. "No, Cilette. If we fail we'll be so tired we'll want to crawl into a hole and forget everything. I thought of Berlin for a while. It wouldn't do. The obstacles would be just as great, even greater. My family would be drawn into the fight. A lot of people would get hurt. No, darling, it's Leipzig or nothing."

"You're right," she said, resuming her sewing. "Here it is just the two of us. We know the place and we still have friends. People have been very nice since we came back."

"It's true. Very nice. Even the trustees seemed almost

BEYOND DESIRE

friendly," he said, "except Kruger, who still hates me as much as ever. But I'm afraid it's going to change when it becomes known that I intend to go ahead with the Passion. They won't like that at all."

"It can't be helped. You can't please everybody," she assured him. "Meanwhile I'd like to start doing something." She turned on him the full impact of her blue eyes. "There must be something I could do to help. I'd do anything."

He was moved by her eagerness, her self-abasement for a cause which meant so little to her. "You're sweet," he said with tender condescension, as one declines the eager but useless services of a child. "I do appreciate your wanting to help, but I'm afraid—"

"I could copy music, couldn't I?" she suggested, a little breathless at her daring. "You'd show me and I'd be very careful and go very slowly at first."

How could he tell her that music copying was a craft, that she would get lost in this galaxy of sharps and flats and minims and quarter notes and semiquavers? . . . How could he resist the appeal of those blue eyes, now so humble and pleading? . . . "It'd be wonderful," he said, mustering all the enthusiasm at his command. "Simply wonderful . . . There's going to be a lot of music to copy. Parts for the singers, for the musicians."

"Perhaps tomorrow before you leave for the Conservatorium you can give me two or three pages, not too difficult, and when you come back I'll show you what I've done."

In spite of himself some of her confidence broke through the wall of his doubts. He was no longer alone. He had an ally now, wise, laborious, devoted unto death . . . The first trembling step was taken toward a performance of the Passion. Johann Sebastian Bach had made his first convert . . .

"You know something?" he whispered in her ear. "I love you."

She nestled against him in a gesture that was both defenseless and victorious.

PIERRE LA MURE

"By the way," he said later that evening, "I don't know if I ever told you, but before I went to Dresden, Schmidt asked me to give him one of the choruses of the Passion. He is president of some sort of vocal society. They have practiced it during my absence, and next week he wants me to come and hear them."

"Can't I go, too?"

"You?"

"And why not?"

"Well—" He lifted her in his arms. "I warn you it's a rather motley crew."

With antlike patience and infinite care Cécile tackled the colossal task of copying the Passion. To his surprise her work was excellent. His compliments brought a gleam of pleasure to her eyes. "I like copying music," she said. "It makes me feel useful."

That evening, as she was rising from the dinner table, he seized her hand and drew her to him. "No work tonight, darling. Tonight we're going to hear Hermann Schmidt's singers. And don't blame me if you are shocked. I warned you they weren't your kind of people."

In the workshop Hermann rushed to greet them. "It's a great honor to welcome you at the Cecilia Vocal Society, Herr Direktor," he recited bowing up and down. "You, too, Frau Mendelssohn."

With agitated solemnity he led them to two armchairs which had been set side by side on a small platform. Meanwhile, the singers had grouped around the homemade conductor's stand, the women standing in front of the men.

"With your permission we'll now begin," said Hermann with punctilious protocol.

Feeling like royalty on display, the two guests smiled their assent, and Schmidt climbed onto the podium, a few feet in front of the platform. He rapped with his flute, which he used as a baton, and dramatically stretched out his arms. At his

BEYOND DESIRE

signal the choir of women's voices rose in the tidelike crescendo of the opening chorus, soon reinforced by the ensemble of the men's chesty baritones.

Felix held his breath. A prickling shudder coursed along his spine, and his hands gripped the arms of his chair, as slowly the Passion came to life. Even without the support of organ and orchestra, despite the singers' shortcomings and Schmidt's inexperienced conducting, its splendor grew with each successive bar, swelling, spreading with the irresistibility of a rising sun inflaming the whole morning sky. He had been right. This was the greatest music ever written, and he would give it to the world, if it cost him his life.

He felt Cécile's hand creeping over his own, and his heart throbbed with love. Yes, she was there, at his side, in this wheelwright's shed, among this alien crowd. Better than words her gesture told him she knew what he was thinking and she would be with him in his task, come what may, for better or for worse and forever, as she had said that day in Dresden when their love had been reborn.

During the intermission they met the singers, shook the men's leathery, callused hands, responded with smiles and compliments to their proud and embarrassed smiles. Hermann Schmidt, living his hour of glory, performed the introductions. This was Hans Muller, this was Otto Reinbeck and this was Karl Ritter. Most of them were factory workers,—tanners in the Grimma Gate dyeing plants, brewery vat men, coopers or teamsters, masons with mortar-caked nails, livery-stable men.

The women also belonged to the working class. Most of them were middle-aged with years of washing, scrubbing, water-pumping imprinted on their jowled faces. A few, however, were young and comely, apple-cheeked and flaxen-haired, dressed in homemade versions of the current fashions.

"And this"—Hermann cleared his throat and waved uneasily at a plump red-haired woman in her late thirties—"is Magdalena Klupp. Magdalena is our soprano leader."

PIERRE LA MURE

"That's because I'm a professional," she explained with ebullient good humor. "Have been practically all my life. Name any theatre you want—Lauenstedt, Magdeburg, Baden—makes no difference, I've played it." She looked straight at Felix. "Many years ago I used to sing at the Friedrich Theatre in Berlin—"

The noisy smoke-filled tavern-theatre . . . Anna Skrumpnagel . . . and he, the spoiled young man-about-town in cashmere cravat and yellow gloves . . .

On their way home Cécile clung to Felix's arm and walked by his side in thoughtful silence. As they were approaching the house she suddenly declared, "I'll never forget this evening. Why, those people are *nice!*"

The wonder of discovery rang in her voice. For the first time she had ventured out of her social circle, mingled on a "calling" basis, so to speak, and not as the basket-bearing Lady Bountiful, with humble people and found them likable and altogether human.

"I thought their singing was very good," she went on, "didn't you?"

"I thought it was excellent. Much better than I had hoped. Of course, they need training, especially the group leaders. They don't keep accurate time, they attack too late or too soon."

"Perhaps you could help them?" she said softly.

"I?"

"Yes. Couldn't you train them, teach them how to keep time?"

Her suggestion caught him unprepared. Whenever he had envisioned the performance of the Passion it had always been in terms of professional vocal ensembles painstakingly trained in regular rehearsal halls by professional chorus masters. Instinctively he had the indulgent, faintly snobbish, condescension of the expert for the amateur.

"I suppose so," he said uncertainly.

"It would be a beginning," she murmured. "It would be better than nothing."

BEYOND DESIRE

And so, Felix began leading a double life. During the day he fulfilled his official duties. In the evening he coached the leaders of the Cecilia Vocal Society.

To Magdalena Klupp, these evenings in high society were the most exciting thing that had happened to her since coming to Leipzig. Ignoring Schmidt's attempts to hush her up, she would recall her years on the stage, the numberless misfortunes—usually the bankruptcy of the manager or the jealousy of her colleagues—that had buffeted her career and, with buoyant complacency and mouth full, the men of exalted rank who had pursued her favors. "A blessed miracle it is," she would say, "I didn't wind up a princess in one of those turreted castles."

Magdalena's prestige, however, stemmed from another source. She was the only known friend of Olga Becker, the Mayor's mistress. Olga was Leipzig's woman of mystery. Ostracized by the local aristocracy, rarely seen in the streets, she almost never left the small house behind the Saint Joseph Catholic Church which Muller had provided for her. Everyone knew and talked about her, but no one knew her. Magdalena did. "Why me and Olga are practically sisters."

Strangely, Cécile grew rather fond of Magdalena Klupp. She was fascinated by this itinerant troupier as by a denizen of some other planet. The legend Magdalena had woven about herself and come to believe concealed a loyal and generous nature, a brave acceptance of a difficult life.

Christmas was approaching. Already Yuletide joyousness was bursting out in the caroling of students in the street.

"Have the trustees made any remark about your going to Tanzen's shed and training the singers?" Cécile asked one evening, after a coaching session.

"I don't think they know about it yet."

"Perhaps they won't say anything."

"Perhaps." They had decided to go to Frankfurt for Christmas and spend the holidays there with the children. Lulled by the calm, Felix began forming cautious hopes. The singing in Tanzen's shed had greatly improved. Everyone was practicing

PIERRE LA MURE

with diligence and tireless good will. Cécile, now assisted occasionally by Schmidt, had almost finished copying the Passion. Perhaps, after the Christmas holidays, some other vocal ensemble might be persuaded to join the Cecilia singers. With luck and hard work they might be ready for a performance on Palm Sunday, in April. Of course, there was still the question of the orchestra, but as Cécile said, God was with them and something would turn up. Perhaps he might be able to hire privately some of the Gewandhaus musicians. He himself would sit at the organ—if they could find an organ. No, it wouldn't be perfect by any means, but it would be something. A modest victory, if not a triumph. People, on hearing the thrilling Passion music, would lose their antagonism. Other, better performances, would be arranged. Little by little the Passion would be heard.

"You know, Cilette," he said, "it may not be as hard as I feared. I'm beginning to have hopes."

Two days later, with the swiftness and violence of summer storm, it struck.

By tradition the last board meeting before Christmas was an informal, cheerful affair. Serious business was set aside. After a brief review of the year's memorable Gewandhaus concerts, Christoph Muller would proceed to compliment everyone, right and left ending in an emotional exchange of Christmas greetings and wishes for the New Year.

The moment Felix entered the board room, he felt that this was going to be no ordinary Christmas meeting. The trustees avoided him, some ostentatiously turning their backs on him as he took his place at the table. In his red damask chair Christoph Muller looked flushed and disgruntled. The atmosphere was one of impending catastrophe.

Nervously the chairman pounded his gavel and declared the meeting open.

"I am sure I express the unanimous opinion of this honorable board," he began in a grave, appropriately solemn tone of voice, "in saying that this year ends for us on a note of bitter

BEYOND DESIRE

disappointment." He rested his heavy eyes on Felix with a mixture of anger and discouragement. "Information has reached us that you intend to persist in your ill-inspired project of performing that music. Is this true?"

Felix remained silent for an instant. It had come . . . Deep in his heart he'd known it would some time. Well, let it come . . . "Yes, Your Lordship."

"And this," Muller went on with rising irritation, "in defiance of this board, the church authorities and the disapproval of the entire population."

Felix looked slowly at the row of stony faces at the table. "Yes, Your Lordship," he said quietly.

"I, for one, intend to stop you," Kruger hissed, barely moving his lips, "and make it impossible for you to proceed with your plans."

"So will I," blurted out another trustee at the end of the table.

After that the meeting degenerated into a verbal free-for-all. Speaking at the same time several board members declared they would discharge any employee of theirs belonging to the Cecilia Vocal Society. All had a go at him, like hounds at a cornered stag. Where would he perform this precious masterpiece? And how would he find the necessary singers and musicians? Muller appealed to his feelings, his standing in the community. How could he—he who had been called Saxony's First Citizen by the King—how could he engage in such a ridiculous venture, stir up animosity in a town that had befriended him?

"Sorry, Christoph," said Felix sadly. "It's something I've got to do."

His words were lost in the hubbub of angry voices. Some trustees suggested that his sole interest in the matter was personal advertisement. "You don't fool us a bit with your talk about the beauties of this old music . . ." Others, self-appointed champions of the Church, decried his meddling in a question of sacred music.

Of course, there were righteous outcries at the social status

PIERRE LA MURE

and morals of the rabble with which he surrounded himself. Common laborers, brewery teamsters, scrubwomen, a so-called actress. But most of all they were outraged at his disregard of their prestige, his defiance of their authority. Hadn't they ruled against the performance of the Passion?

"Yes," Kruger shouted, leading the attack, "how do you dare to defy this board?"

"I'm not defying anybody," Felix snapped. "I'm doing something I want to do, and since I'm doing it on my own time and without taking a pfennig of the board's money, I don't see what you have to say about it."

"You'll find out." Kruger's eyes narrowed into slits of brimming vindictiveness. "I'll run you out of town before I get through with you."

Finally the chairman pounded his gavel and re-established a semblance of order. "The whole incident is most regrettable." He spoke fast, like a man anxious to close a futile and acrimonious debate. "But since the Herr Direktor fulfills his functions and doesn't use any of the board's funds, the trustees cannot legally enforce any disciplinary measure and will therefore refrain from discussing this painful subject any further." Again he slammed down his gavel and added hurriedly, "The meeting's adjourned."

When Felix returned home that evening he found Cécile hunched at his desk copying music. Hermann Schmidt on the opposite side was doing the same.

"Look, Felix," she cried happily. "We've almost finished. We'll be through by Christmas." She stopped abruptly. "What's wrong, darling?"

"The war is on," he said tonelessly. He ran his hand over his eyes in a gesture of weariness. "Really on, this time. We must prepare for the worst. Kruger wants to run me out of town."

"He's a very rich and powerful man," said Schmidt, sadly clucking his tongue. "He owns the Grimma Gate Dyeing Works. If he learns that some of his men belong to the society, he'll

BEYOND DESIRE

discharge them. Sure as snow comes in winter. I'd better go and warn them not to come to the shed."

"That's right," nodded Felix. "Tell them not to come till they hear from me." As the old flute player was crossing to the door, he called after him. "Sorry to bring you all this trouble, Hermann. I'll try to make up for it somehow."

"You don't worry about me, Herr Direktor," said Hermann, with concern. "Go to bed and try to sleep."

Neither Felix nor Cécile spoke after Hermann had gone. They sat, side by side, gazing unseeingly at the fire, each lost in his thoughts. At last he let out a sigh and looked at her deep and long. "This time it's going to be serious," he said calmly. "You see, darling, it's not only Kruger who is against me, but the whole board, including my good friend Christoph."

He turned to her, grasped her hand in both his own, and his tone became urgent. "Are you absolutely sure you want to be in this thing? It's going to be an ugly fight, I can feel it. You should've seen Kruger's eyes when he was talking to me. He reminded me of a snake. Why don't you go to Frankfurt, spend Christmas with the children?"

His words trailed off as she slowly shook her head. Nothing he could say would make her change her mind. She turned to him. "Don't forget God is with us," she said quietly.

Again he was startled by her indomitable faith. As long as she was at his side there would be hope . . .

Next morning when he came down into the dining room for breakfast he saw the newspaper neatly folded over his napkin as usual. He rustled it open, cheerfully greeted Gustav. Then his eyes fell on a two-column headline on the first page: "A Blasphemous Christmas."

The article was short and well written. It told how a rabble of amateur singers calling themselves the Cecilia Vocal Society met in a wheelwright's shed at night to profane the spirit of Christmas by bellowing an old piece of church music, under the personal direction of a certain well-known musical person-

PIERRE LA MURE

ality of the town, born himself in a non-Christian faith. It ended on an ominous note: "We hope that the municipal authorities will promptly put an end to this sacrilege."

It had stopped snowing, and he decided to walk to the Conservatorium. The doorman of the Gewandhaus Building gave him a chilly nod instead of his usual expansive "Good morning, Herr Direktor." Even the professors he met in the corridors of the Conservatorium hastened their steps at the sight of him and hurriedly ducked into their classes. Only his composition students had not changed. If anything, their eyes shone with greater affection, as if to assure him of their loyalty.

He returned home early that afternoon and found Cécile in the study, sobbing. "The landlord came to see me," she said.

"About the singing?"

She nodded. "That—and something else."

The "something else" concerned the sort of people who frequented the house, especially at night. Common laborers, undesirable women—one of them an actress . . . There was a clause in the lease forbidding the entertainment of immoral persons in the house . . .

He listened, choked with remorse, a muscle twitching in his jaw. That also had come . . . For years she had pleaded with him to buy the house. But no, he had been mulish about it. He hadn't wanted to own a house in Leipzig because he'd still hoped to move to Berlin. Well, now he had no home, couldn't receive his friends. This was the end of the coaching sessions.

"What are we going to do, Felix?" she asked, barely forming the words.

"I just don't know." A feeble smile trembled at the corners of his mouth. "We are in a hole, my darling, and have about as much chance to perform the Passion by Palm Sunday as to grow wheat in my hat."

"Why Palm Sunday?"

"Because that's the service for which it was written. You see, darling, in the old days almost every organist wrote at least one or two Passions."

BEYOND DESIRE

She was listening attentively, her eyes fastened on him full of love and awe of his knowledge. He found a strange and new pleasure in speaking about music to her. It was one of the things he had dreamed about. And so he went on, warming up to his subject, "There have been all kinds of Passion music: choral Passion, motet Passion, scenic Passion, oratorio Passion. There are even different Passions for the various days of the Holy Week."

He was extolling the merits of the Passion by Johann Walther, who had written the first Lutheran Passion, when Gustav knocked on the door and announced that Schmidt and Tanzen were waiting outside in the hallway.

"What can they want?" he asked, looking apprehensively at Cécile. Only a matter of the utmost gravity would prompt them to call on him uninvited.

The two men entered, the wheelwright towering over the flute player, their faces set in lines of dismay.

"Excuse us for calling on you like this, Herr Direktor," Schmidt began. "We come from the City Hall. His Lordship sent for us. He said the whole thing was our fault, that the city was up in arms and he had had enough of it. He was so mad he couldn't stay on his chair and started pacing up and down. First he turned to Franz and he said he would have his guild license revoked so that he couldn't work. Then he came to me, and said I must disband the Cecilia Society at once or he would fine us a thousand thalers for illegal gathering. He told me I was a disgrace to my profession, a disgrace to the Gewandhaus Orchestra, and he was giving me two choices. Resign now or wait till the next board meeting and be discharged. So I resigned."

He had spoken without a break, hardly taking time to breathe, and Felix and Cécile had been too stunned by the news to notice that the two men were still standing.

"Please be seated," said Cécile, who was the first to recover. Without hesitation she walked to the brandy decanter and filled two glasses. "Here," she said, handing each one a glass. "Drink this. You need it."

PIERRE LA MURE

Felix's eyes followed Schmidt as the old man lowered himself into a chair. So, that's how they were going to fight . . . Starve a working man, dismiss Schmidt . . . Like a lackey, after twenty-nine years of devoted and competent service . . . Schmidt, the dean of the Gewandhaus Orchestra . . .

"It's all right," Schmidt went on with a brave unconvincing shrug. "I was planning to retire next year anyway. The wife and me, we'd been talking about moving to the farm for good."

"I think it's a shame," Cécile said with ladylike violence.

Felix did not make any comment. He seemed to have withdrawn into some deep and compelling meditation.

All at once, life returned to him. "Hermann," he said sharply, "how far is your farm from the city?"

"Four and a half miles, Herr Direktor. About forty minutes from Saint Thomas Square, depending on what kind of a horse—"

"Where do you pay your taxes? . . . Leipzig?"

"No, Herr Direktor. At the Reudnitz City Hall."

"Reudnitz?" he repeated, his face tense, his tone urgent. "You're sure?"

"Sure, I'm sure," retorted Schmidt in a huff. "After all, I—"

"Hallelujah!" Felix gave a sigh of relief. "Then your farm is outside the city limits, and Muller can't do anything. Would you be willing to lease me the farm for a few months? We'll need it for rehearsals, and it'll be wiser to have the place in my name. I'll explain later." Leaving the flutist to his conjectures, he turned to the wheelwright. "Tell me, Franz, how long would it take you to build me a coach?"

"Depends on what kind, Herr Direktor," Tanzen said, slowly. "But without my guild license I couldn't even build you a wheelbarrow."

"You couldn't in Leipzig, but you could in Reudnitz," said Felix quickly. "If you moved to the farm, turned one of the sheds into a workshop, you could build me a coach, couldn't you?"

For a while the wheelwright's eyebrows knitted in labored mulling. Then abruptly comprehension came, breaking into a

BEYOND DESIRE

flashing smile on his red leathery face. "Sure I could!" he exclaimed, his blue eyes sparkling with new hope. "I could build you anything, any kind of coach you want."

"Good. Come early in the morning. With Hermiann," he added, glancing over his shoulder at the still-bemused flutist.

With a wave he dismissed the matter and leaned forward, his gaze encompassing the two men. "Now listen to me." His voice lowered to a confidential rumble. "This is what I want you to do."

Cécile was watching him, bewildered by his talk and even more by his manner. This was a new man, a man she didn't know . . . Soft-spoken, yet brisk and commanding. Giving orders, telling people what to do, expecting to be obeyed and—she saw it in the way Schmidt and Tanzen were looking at him, nodding to him—being obeyed . . .

His tenderness, his sensuality, his moodiness she knew. His fabulous capacity for work, his kindness, his complete lack of vanity . . . But this commanding tone, this sudden affirmation of authority was new. Perhaps it took a terrible shock to uncover the core of a man? . . .

With an effort she pulled herself out of her musings as she heard him say, "Is this all clear?"

The two men nodded. "Yes, Herr Direktor."

They got up, and Schmidt said, still a little groggy but ready to bounce into action, "I sure feel better than when we came in. Don't you, Franz?"

Tanzen didn't say anything, but his grin was eloquent. He too had regained hope.

With the punctilious courtesy of the poor, the two men thanked Cécile for the glass of brandy, and took their leave. Felix escorted them to the door.

"As I was telling you, there are various kinds of Passions," he said as he returned to the study. "Those written according to the Saint Matthew text were always played on Palm Sundays. The Passion by Johann Sebastian Bach is one of them. Have you noticed how he wrote the Saint Matthew text in red ink as a sign of reverence?"

PIERRE LA MURE

"Aren't you going to tell me what you said to them?" she interrupted in a small injured voice. "What's all this about renting the farm and ordering a traveling coach?"

He looked at her, a pensive smile in his brown eyes. "When those two men came in they were two very frightened people," he said quietly. "Imagine Muller sending for them, taking their livelihood away . . . they were panic-stricken, didn't know where to turn or what to do, and they turned to us, their only friends who could help them. I just couldn't let them go empty-handed, without some sort of hope."

"You were right."

"And you know what happened? I was so angry at Muller for taking revenge on those two poor defenseless people that I decided to go ahead with a plan I'd entertained at one time and discarded."

"Why?"

"Many reasons. For one thing, it is melodramatic and I don't like melodrama. It has many weaknesses and it is full of risks. And in the end there isn't the slightest guarantee that it will work. It's a pretty desperate plan."

"At least it's a plan," she said. "I tried to find a way out and I couldn't think of anything."

"Well—we're going to try this one," he said with a rueful sigh. "It's going to bring many changes and upset our whole life." He felt her stiffen and hugged her more tightly. "I'm afraid it can't be helped. Darling, we're going to move to Schmidt's farm."

She gasped and her eyes filled with tears. They didn't speak for a moment, then she said, "When are we moving?"

He hesitated before striking the other blow. "During the Christmas holidays." He felt her body tremble against his. "I know you're thinking of the children. It will be hard spending Christmas away from them. But try to think of the kind of Christmas Schmidt and Tanzen would have had."

She wiped her tears with her wrists, even tried to smile. "You're right. Tomorrow I'll start packing."

VIII

They spent a melancholy but not unhappy Christmas at the farm, where they had moved three days before. They were six at dinner that night—if Gertrude, who kept running back to her stove, could be counted as a guest. Felix presided, smiling now and then at Cécile across the table. Franz Tanzen also was there, uncomfortable in a stiff collar and Sunday clothes. He, too, had moved to the farm, bringing with him most of his equipment, and installed a combination blacksmith and wheelwright shop in one of the farm's empty barns. At Cécile's suggestion Magdalena Klupp, who had no family, had been invited. She added considerably to the allure of the occasion by the flashing elegance of her attire—a gold-frogged green velvet court dress.

"Yesterday I went to Lindenau," said Schmidt, as the dinner was coming to an end. "They've got a nice choral society there and I told them your proposition."

"What did they say?" asked Felix.

"They were very much interested. You see, Herr Direktor, they've never been paid for singing and they just couldn't believe it when I told them you were offering professional musicians' wages."

"Naturally, some were scared. They said, 'Look what happened to you and Tanzen.'

"But I explained to them nothing like that could happen to them because they didn't live in Leipzig. I think they'll come, Herr Direktor, and that'll give us seventy-five singers. Good ones, too."

"Let's hope so."

Already Magdalena, who had been silent too long, was taking the floor. "Me, too, I've been to see some of my sopranos. Naturally there were some that were scared because they'd heard rumors they'd be beaten up, or their taxes would be raised, or their husbands would lose their jobs if they came

PIERRE LA MURE

here. So I asked them if it was turnip juice they had instead of blood and in the end they said they were sorry and would come."

"Fine work," Felix said. "But I'm afraid those threats are real and you'd better be careful. I don't like your living alone in Leipzig and it might be safer for you to live here for a while."

Magdalena wouldn't hear of it. "How do you think it'd look if I stayed here when I keep telling them there's nothing to be scared about? Besides what can they do to me, Herr Direktor? They can't raise my taxes, since I've got nothing. I can't lose my job because I haven't even got one. Not even a husband they can take it out on, for the reason I am what you call an unmarried *Fräulein*. And they won't beat me up because everybody knows me in the Saint Joseph district where I live and they know I am practically a sister to Olga."

"All right," nodded Felix, "but be careful."

For a while they lingered at the table making plans, discussing various problems. It was decided that the rehearsals would be held in the main barn across the courtyard. Schmidt and Tanzen promised to have it ready in a day or two. Then Schmidt said that a number of the neighborhood farmers and their wives had offered their services but would prefer to rehearse in the afternoon.

"You see, Herr Direktor, they aren't like us city people. They're used to going to bed by sundown. Come six o'clock and they're sleepy. So I thought maybe with your permission you might let me train them, since you'll be in Leipzig all day."

Felix nodded absently. The enormity and difficulty of the task became more apparent every hour. How could a competent vocal ensemble be fused from all these various elements? And what about an orchestra, soloists, an organ? What about the management, the administrative details, the bookkeeping? No one around was capable of attending to these things. Tanzen, Schmidt, Magdalena—they were full of courage and good will. But courage and good will weren't enough.

Wearily he ran his hand over his eyes, and across the table. Cécile understood the meaning of his gesture.

BEYOND DESIRE

"You're worried, aren't you, darling?" she asked later that evening.

"Yes," he said in a low voice. "Worried—and a little frightened. No, not by the rumors, the absurd things they say about me in town. I've been expecting that. What frightens me is the details, the complexities, the thousand and one little problems that are bound to arise every day. I just don't know how I'll be able to do all the things I shall have to do and still drive every morning to Leipzig, hold my classes at the Conservatorium, rehearse the orchestra, attend the board meetings, conduct the regular concerts."

He looked at her with pleading anguish. "Darling, why don't you let me resign? Then I could give all my time here, at the farm."

She crouched on the floor at his feet, her face raised to him. "Please don't, Felix. I know it's too much for one person, but so long as you are director of the Conservatorium and conductor of the Gewandhaus you are an important official. They can't ignore you. Your personal prestige gives weight to the cause you're fighting for. If you resign, you lose all that."

He saw the soundness of her argument. "As usual you're right," he said gently, running his hand over her blond head.

"Have faith, darling," she murmured. "Please have faith. You'll see—"

"I know." He smiled ruefully. "Something will turn up."

Strangely, something did turn up the following afternoon in the shape of a tall elderly gentleman in a well-cut double-breasted gray coat. He introduced himself to Hermann as Herr Jakob Meyer Howlitz and demanded to see the Herr Direktor.

"I am glad to see you again, Herr Howlitz," said Felix, greeting the visitor at the door of his "office." "Even," he went on, waving the banker to a chair, "if you've driven all this way to tell me that the Leipzig Jewish community is furious at me and invoking Jehovah's wrath upon my head. I am not exactly popular with the Christians either, if this can be any consolation to them. In fact, I don't seem to be popular with anyone."

PIERRE LA MURE

"You are with me," said the banker slowly and distinctly.

"What did you say?"

"I said you're quite popular with me. I am here strictly on my own initiative this time. As a matter of fact, I am prepared to be severely criticized for what I am about to say, but I've been watching you for some time. I think I understand what you're trying to do. I am in full sympathy with you and I am here to offer you my services."

Felix looked at the elderly financier with mystified gratitude. "No need to tell you that your services would be accepted with enthusiasm. But perhaps I should warn you that this venture of mine, as you call it, announces itself as distinctly unprofitable, hazardous and unlikely to succeed."

"I am aware of that," said the banker quietly. "I've weighed the chances before making up my mind. I am not acting on an impulse."

For the first time Felix permitted himself a small chuckle. "May I say, Herr Howlitz, that you do not strike me as the sort of man who would do anything on an impulse. How much time would you be willing to give?"

"My full time," said the banker with calm. "My bank has long ceased to need me and I've left it in the hands of my head cashier, a most competent man. I'm entitled to a vacation and I can't think of any place I'd rather spend it than here. You may use me in any capacity you wish. Being a banker I am therefore an administrator and may try to make myself useful in this manner."

Felix sprang to his feet. "My dear Herr Howlitz, you've just been appointed administrator, treasurer, bookkeeper and executive manager of this organization. Permit me to express my deep appreciation of your generosity."

There was a knock on the door. Cécile peered in. "Lunch is ready, darling."

He beckoned to her. "This is Herr Howlitz, our new business manager." He turned to the old gentleman, who was rising from his chair. "This, Herr Howlitz, is my—"

BEYOND DESIRE

But already she was grasping the banker's blue-veined hands. "I know we're going to become great friends," she said with emotion. "You may not know it, but you came directly in answer to my prayers."

Since Felix had moved out of Leipzig, rumors had run high about him. When it became known that he had sent an appeal to amateur vocal societies in neighboring towns and offered regular musicians' wages, there was much indignation. Pastor Hagen climbed into the Saint Thomas pulpit and spoke loftily about "the evil-doer who buys poor men's consciences to do the devil's work." In a statement from City Hall, Mayor Muller declared that the whole thing was "a gauntlet flung into Leipzig's face." Meanwhile, Kruger's affiliates went about whispering that a dangerous rabble was being trained at the farm under the pretext of music by a vague but sinister non-Christian conspiracy.

Thus, on a morning in early January, there was extreme surprise and much speculation when Felix was seen alighting from his carriage in front of the Gewandhaus Building. Henceforth, every morning he was observed doing the same thing, leaving promptly after four every afternoon, in a brougham and occasionally in a closed sleigh. He went about his business, apparently unaware of the gossip circulating about him.

Only his face seemed to have grown paler. His manner, never familiar, became distant. He was unapproachable, except on strictly business matters. At the board meetings he took little part in the discussions, ignored taunts and parried leading questions. When Muller inquired why he had moved to Reudnitz, Felix replied that the country air was distinctly cleaner than that of Leipzig.

For a while his daily presence in town, his apparent unconcern, spurred the rumormongers into a last flurry of absurd or ominous fabrications. Then, all of a sudden, like a pricked balloon, the charges against him collapsed. The non-Christian conspiracy was first to fall by the wayside, choked to death by

PIERRE LA MURE

its own absurdity. As to his sacrilegious meddling into church affairs, people were getting tired of that, too. What was so blasphemous about getting people together to sing some old church music? Sure he was using farmers and workers. Who else could he get, if His Reverence refused him the Saint Thomas choirs and the trustees didn't let him use the singers of the Leipzig Choral Society?

But the final and sweeping argument was his irreproachable private life. Never a breath of scandal about that. A fine, respectable man, that's what he was. A good husband, a good father. Everyone had seen him on Sunday afternoons in spring walking on the Promenade with his wife and children. Now a man like that wouldn't do anything wrong. And what about his wife? A real lady if there ever was one. Pretty as a picture and a Christian, too. Now why should a lady like that keep her children away and move out of her beautiful house and go to live with her husband on some farm? Because she believed he was right. And, who could tell, maybe he was . . .

By the end of January the tension had subsided.

"I'm beginning to think it was a good idea to come here," he told Cécile one evening. "Perhaps things are going to work out after all."

It seemed in fact that the miracle had already begun. The farm had become a beehive of activity, a combination of hostelry and singing school. Out of all this jumble of humanity, a genuine vocal ensemble was coming to life. More than two hundred singers had responded to Felix's appeal. Small vocal groups from various small towns, many former members of the disbanded Cecilia Vocal Society who sneaked out of town at dusk, farmers from the neighborhood, even itinerant field hands.

And, of course, Magdalena was there, tireless of limb and tongue. She had become an integral part of the venture. Although still living in Leipzig, she arrived early at the farm, often walking all the way. She was in a class by herself, belonging to all groups, at ease with everyone. She coached backward singers with unexpected patience and obtained surprising results.

BEYOND DESIRE

Pursuing her missionary work among her wide and varied acquaintance, she brought more recruits than anyone else. Waitresses, beer-garden entertainers, ladies of uncertain calling. All great chums of hers and like her out of work. Her ultimate ambition was to "convert" Olga, the Mayor's mistress. Up to now she had failed. "But don't worry," she would say, "I'll bring her yet."

To Felix, the greatest wonder of all was the fever of enthusiasm that had descended upon all these people. As he strolled among the groups during recesses, he would feel their genuine love for the Passion and their devotion to him. Compliments from his lips brought blushes of pride to their cheeks.

"They're getting really good," he told Cécile one evening. "It's extraordinary how much they have accomplished in one short month."

"It's because they love you," she said. "You'll see, darling, everything's going to be all right."

Even Herr Howlitz began showing signs of cautious optimism. "I might as well confess I entertained little hope for the success of your venture when I came to offer you my services," he told Felix one Sunday afternoon before rehearsal.

"Then why did you come?"

"Because I felt you were doing something worthwhile and I wanted to help, even if we were heading into defeat. Once in a lifetime a man should allow himself the luxury of a noble lost cause."

"And now what is your opinion? Are we still noble and lost?"

"Now," said the banker, gazing speculatively at his glass, "I think we have a slim chance. Our greatest problem, in my opinion, is that we are confronted with the opposition of a madman and an honest fanatic."

"I suppose you are referring to Kruger and Pastor Hagen. I don't think anything can be done about Kruger, but I've been thinking a great deal about the pastor lately. Perhaps if I went to see him, apologized for my behavior, explain—"

He stopped, discouraged by the old man's quiet shake of the head. "You think it would be useless?"

PIERRE LA MURE

"I am afraid so. There are two kinds of people who are impervious to reason. Madmen, of course, and honest fanatics. A crook is always ready to compromise. Not so an honest man. And I am afraid Pastor Hagen is one of them. It would be very difficult to show him the error of his ways."

They were silent for an instant. Then Felix rose from his chair. "By the way, Kruger is out of town. Nobody seems to know where he is. Good riddance."

The banker looked up at him sharply. "I don't agree. I like to know where my enemy is, and what he is doing."

"Well," said Felix, starting toward the door, "we'll see what he has up his sleeve. And now, back to work."

These rare moments of relaxation were for him a welcome diversion in the grueling routine of his life. With delight he had discovered that Herr Howlitz was a man of culture as well as an efficient administrator.

To Cécile Herr Howlitz also gave a much-needed companionship. As she had predicted, they had become great friends. Sometimes she would confide her anxieties over Felix's health. "He looks so tired!" she would sigh. "Do you think I was wrong to stop him from resigning? At the time it seemed to be the right thing for him to keep his official position, but now I am not so sure. I wonder how long he'll be able to go on like this . . . And those headaches of his, they frighten me. He doesn't speak about them, but I see the pain in his eyes . . . How do you think it's all going to end, this Passion business? Tell, me, Herr Howlitz, do you really think this old music is worth all that Felix is going through for it? . . ."

The old gentleman would shake his head. "Yes, I've noticed how tired he looks. But, please, don't torment yourself. Nothing anyone could do would make him stop. He feels it is his duty to give the Passion to the world and he will do it or die trying. He is like that. One of these men who must do what their consciences tell them to do at whatever the cost. There are very few like him . . . And perhaps it's just as well. As to your question how it will end, nobody knows."

BEYOND DESIRE

Thus January ended. At the farm life went on, crowded with work, heavy with anxiety but brightened with hope.

Abruptly the weather turned brutally cold. It stopped snowing, but an icy wind arose that wouldn't stop but went on and on.

That morning when Felix entered his Gewandhaus office he saw a man standing in front of the fireplace, his back to him, still in his traveling cloak.

At the sound of Felix's footsteps the stranger whirled around. It was Herr Kruger.

"I have just arrived from Dresden," he said.

Felix stopped, rooted to the floor by a jab of sudden, withering pain. His brain seemed to swell, crash through the bony dome of his skull. In a wincing reflex his hand flashed to his brow. For a few seconds he stood motionless in a vortex of blackness spangled with blistering sparks.

Then it passed. As swiftly as it had come. The image of the room and the man standing before the fireplace shuddered before his blinking eyes. "Excuse me," he heard himself say, "I must have had a fainting spell."

"Startled, aren't you?" Kruger was now standing across the desk, a leer of exultant jubilation on his face. "Gave you quite a jolt, didn't I?"

Infuriated by Felix's look of incomprehension, he leaned forward, barking the words. "Still pretending, aren't you? Fooling everybody with that handsome face and lofty air of yours, aren't you? But not me! I've been to Dresden. Understand? Dresden!"

Suddenly, like a wound-up watch, Felix's brain was clicking again. Oh, my God! Kruger has found out about Maria!

Yes, he had. And he couldn't control his joy at the thought of it; he was wallowing in triumph, his lips drawn over his yellow teeth in a sneer of victory. The great Herr Direktor! . . . Such a famous musician and such a fine man. Until now people hadn't really believed the rumors against him because he was

PIERRE LA MURE

personally irreproachable. But wait till they learned a few things about this paragon of husbands, this devoted father. Wait till they learned about what had gone on in a certain hotel on Theater Platz . . .

"And this time they will have to believe what I want them to believe because I have proof. Signed affidavits. Proof! I'll run you out of this town, you and the other Jews. And after that I'll go after the Catholics of the Saint Joseph district. And I'll run them out also because I am rich, I am powerful, I have men who will do anything I tell them to do!"

The words tumbled out of his distorted mouth in a panting frenzy. He was addressing some imaginary crowd, conjuring some confused vision of power and violence. Suddenly Felix realized that Kruger was insane. Muller had been right. The man was really mad.

"Get out," he said without anger. "Go ahead. Do what you want, but get out."

When he returned to the farm that evening, Cécile immediately sensed that something was wrong. "Please, darling, what is it?"

He looked at her strangely. "We're lost, Cécile," he said in a toneless voice. "Really lost this time. And through my fault."

He told her about Kruger's visit and saw the blood drain out of her face.

"You must resign," she said. "Resign immediately."

He shook his head. "No, Cécile. Not now." After a pause, he said, "I wish you'd go to Frankfurt."

"Please don't send me away," she said in a whisper.

He did not insist, sensing that anguish would be more cruel away from him than at his side.

Groups had formed around the Gewandhaus Building when he arrived next morning. He saw the hatred on their faces, the brandished fists, and he heard their threatening rumble. All day he went about feeling the hostility around him. When he left that afternoon the knots of people had formed again.

Herr Howlitz's predictions proved right. Each day the groups

BEYOND DESIRE

of people waiting for him in front of the Gewandhaus Building grew more threatening and audacious. Now he felt grimy hands tugging at his clothes when he walked up the wide entrance stairs. No marshal of police was to be seen. Instead of abating, the temper of the town was growing worse. An eloquent sermon by Pastor Hagen on "those who betrayed the sanctity of marriage" had produced considerable effect. Newspaper articles, a swarm of rumors, old and new, kept churning public opinion into a mood of incipient violence.

The Dresden episode had been repeated, enlarged and distorted into one of many. After all, he had often gone to Dresden before, hadn't he? And what about his trips to England and Paris? He probably had women there, too. And because he was such a wicked man, everything he stood for was wicked, too. That Passion, for instance. After all he wasn't even born a Christian, how did he dare to conduct a work that was all about the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Even the old discredited fable about the non-Christian conspiracy was rearing its hoary head and finding adherents.

At the farm Herr Howlitz was becoming alarmed. "Please, Felix, resign," he urged. "Your obstinacy may well push Kruger into doing something desperate. You are not only endangering yourself but many innocent people. Remember, the man is mad, he is going to do something crazy."

Felix nodded. "You're right," he said. He admitted the soundness of the banker's arguments. Yet every morning, like an exhausted prize fighter staggering into the ring at the sound of the bell, he returned to Leipzig, his head throbbing, his ears ringing with Herr Howlitz's warnings, leaving behind a trembling, white-faced Cécile.

She, too, tormented him, but in another way. By her silence, her uncomplaining obedience. She was breaking under the strain, and Felix knew it. The sight of her lovely face, pinched and distraught with fear, sent him into a panic of self-reproach. He had had to forbid her to come and fetch him at the Gewandhaus in the afternoon. But he couldn't stop her from waiting for him on the road, half frozen and haggard from anguish.

PIERRE LA MURE

"Cilette, my poor Cilette," he murmured one day as he pulled her to him on the carriage seat and wrapped his cloak over her shoulders, "what have I done to you! I should never have let you come into this thing."

She lifted her blue eyes to him. "I would have hated you if you hadn't," she said, smiling at him with heartrending love and relief that at least for a few hours he was safe and she was in his arms.

Thus a week passed, a week that seemed an eternity. The evening rehearsals were still held but a mood of sullen restlessness had settled over the singers. Why they still came was a puzzle to Felix. Their faith had gone, they knew that the "venture" was doomed, swaying like a mortally axed tree before the final collapse.

Only Magdalena had not surrendered to the atmosphere of debacle. She still went from group to group, sharp of tongue and unvanquished in spirit, berating them for their cowardice, her generous bosom heaving with her stinging rebukes. "Milk and turnip juice, that's what must come out of your veins when the doctor cups you! . . . Blind as bats and with the brains of fleas you must be to believe those Leipzig hypocrites. Yes, hypocrites, that's what they are, down to the last of them. You'd think they were blessed little angels the way they talk. How about His Lordship? Why didn't the newspaper write about him, why didn't the pastor give a little speech about him? Olga herself was telling me she was disgusted the way they're hounding the poor Herr Direktor. But you wait, I'll still bring her here one of these days. That'll give them something to talk about."

"I know the end has come," Felix told Cécile one evening as they were about to go to sleep. "I know I'm beaten and there isn't a chance in the world to perform the Passion on Palm Sunday. I know you are unhappy and it is absurd for me to keep on going to Leipzig."

"Then why do you?" she murmured. "Why don't you resign, disband the singers and put an end to the whole thing?"

He looked at her for a long time through the brown sadness of his eyes. "Cilette," he said at last, "do you remember that

BEYOND DESIRE

day in Switzerland when you said I should come to Leipzig, and I was angry at you because I wanted to go to Berlin and you couldn't give me any reason, except that you had a 'feeling'? Well, it's the same now. I have a feeling . . . I'll be hanged if I know what it is. But something tells me I must hold on a little longer. Just a little longer."

"Perhaps God will come to our help," she said, and her voice was low and muffled with doubt. For the first time she was wavering in her faith. "Sometimes I feel He has forsaken us."

"Don't, darling," he said quietly, and it was her turn to be surprised. "He hasn't forsaken us. It certainly looks like it, but somehow He'll make it right. Don't ask me how. I can't even imagine how He can help us, even with a miracle. But He will, you'll see."

A pale echo of his old bantering moods returned an instant, and he smiled. "I only wish He would hurry a bit."

And so, next morning he drove again to Leipzig. There was nothing to do but go on, groping blindly ahead, trusting that secret "feeling" that told him to hold on a little longer. Just a little longer . . .

It was during dinner one evening that he noticed an ugly bruise on Magdalena's cheek. She had tried to conceal it under a thick layer of unguent and face powder, but with little success. The blotch of purplish flesh showed through, and she was now pointing at it, describing to Tanzen how she had acquired it by slipping down the stairs of her house. The lie was so palpable that even the wheelwright, who wasn't very astute, was pinching the lobe of his ear in frank disbelief.

"You'd better take care of it," he said at last. "If you got that bruise by slipping down the stairs, unless you were walking down on your hands, I'd hate to see the bruises you must have on your back."

Dinner over, Felix asked her to meet him in his office, and a moment later there was a timid knock on the door.

"Sit down, Magdalena," he said gently. "Now tell me the truth."

Her bravado collapsed. "A man beat me up last night when

PIERRE LA MURE

I came home from the rehearsal. He was waiting for me behind the door."

"Did you make a complaint to the district marshal?"

She smiled ruefully, gazing at the flame of the candle in the pewter holder. "If I went to Hans, you know what he'd say? He'd shake me by the shoulders and say, 'You damn fool, I told you something like that would happen.'"

"You're going to stay here from now on, understand?" said Felix with affectionate sternness. "Frau Mendelssohn will take care of you, she's very good at this sort of thing. If necessary, she will call a doctor. And please, don't come to rehearsals for a while. The singers are frightened enough as it is."

She nodded meekly, apologized for the trouble she was giving. "I'll do whatever you say, Herr Direktor. Remember, at Christmas you already told me I should stay here. But I wasn't scared then. Now I am, I really am." A tremulousness came into her voice. "You, too, Herr Direktor, you'd better be careful. They're in real earnest this time."

She got up, took a few steps toward the door, then turned around, an odd smile on her lips. "Strange our meeting like this, isn't it, after all those years. I see you don't remember, but one night at the Friedrich you were standing in the wings watching Anna Skrupnagel and I was waiting for my turn. I gave you a quick nudge but you didn't even glance at me . . . God, you were handsome! We all envied Anna." She sighed and with a shrug opened the door. "Well, good night, Herr Direktor."

"Good night, Magdalena."

For a moment he stared unseeingly at the wavering flame of the candle. Memories stirred dimly in his mind. The Friedrich Theatre . . . Anna Skrupnagel . . . Leipzigerstrasse . . . That life so carefree and confident, had it really been his? And that handsome young man waiting in the wings on the errand for Karl, had it really been he? . . .

With a heave he pushed himself up to his feet and went to the rehearsal barn.

One afternoon, two days later Cécile and Herr Howlitz were

BEYOND DESIRE

sitting in the office, both pretending to be absorbed in their task.

"Do you think this wind will ever stop?" she asked without raising her eyes from her knitting.

"I doubt it," he replied fitfully.

As usual, he was writing in his ledgers, but not in his usual placid, methodical way. He kept glancing out of the window, nibbling the tip of his quill.

"What's the matter?" This time she rested her hands in her lap and looked at him. "Since this morning you've been fretting and behaving most peculiarly. Are you by any chance beginning to crack up, like everyone around here? Come on, tell me what it is."

"I might as well," he said, deliberately turning to her. "This morning I received a disturbing message from my head cashier. Felix has been hurt." He saw her face go white and added hastily, "Nothing serious. Someone threw a stone at him as he was entering the Gewandhaus."

She sprang to her feet, ran toward the bedroom door. He still had time to call after her, "Please, Cécile, don't go . . ." but already she was out of the office.

A few minutes later Tanzen was cracking his whip over his two galloping horses, and Cécile was speeding over the Reudnitz Road, her eyes stone-hard in her taut, white face.

At the same moment Felix was sitting in his Gewandhaus office, gazing out of the window. The stone gash in his cheek had stopped bleeding but still throbbed dully. Now and then a wince of pain creased his face. Well, it had begun . . . After threats, the blows. First Magdalena, now himself. Tomorrow . . .

He heard the knob turn. His Lordship slipped swiftly into the room, latched the door. Only then did he seem to relax.

"May I sit down, Felix?" he asked thickly. He slumped down on a chair and stared down at the carpet for an instant, his mouth slack. "You know, of course, I had nothing to do with that stone. But I know who did it. If you want I can try to have him arrested."

"What's the use? Tomorrow there'll be another one."

PIERRE LA MURE

Muller lifted his bulging bloodshot eyes. "You wouldn't have a drink, would you? Schnapps or brandy?"

"Only port. I'm sorry."

"Never mind." He ran the tip of his tongue over his lips. "Olga's leaving me. If she does, I'm finished in this town."

He spoke in hurried gasps, rushing words between breaths.

"She's learned about Magdalena. She wants me to arrest the man who beat her up. She doesn't know I can't. Kruger would be in my office in five minutes and have him released. She says I am a coward and a hypocrite. She wants to go to your side."

Felix looked at the wheezing, frightened man before him. Only a few months ago they had been friends. Almost . . . Now they were in enemy camps and by an irony of fate, both in desperate situations. "Why don't you send her away?"

"She won't go. You don't know her. She'll barricade herself in the house, make a scandal. Look, Felix, I'll make a bargain with you. When she comes you send her away, and in exchange I'll tell you a secret. A really big one."

"You don't have to. I'm thinking of your wife and children. There's been enough grief. If Olga comes, I'll send her away. You have my word."

A gleam of incredulousness flashed through Muller's eyes. How easy it had been . . . "Thank you," he mumbled.

"You'd better go now. Someone may come in."

The Mayor stirred uneasily on his chair, swaying his bulk in response to some anxious dilemma. "I'm going to tell you just the same," he said at last. He leaned forward, lowered his voice to a whisper. "Kruger's planning to send a gang of ruffians into the Jewish district some night next week. They'll be armed. The chief marshal told me. He saw the shipment of arms Kruger received from Bavaria. I told you the man's crazy."

"Why can't you arrest him?"

"On what grounds? Madness doesn't show like smallpox. And how can I prove what these arms are for? If I had a sworn statement, some papers, I could try—" He got up. "Anyway now you know. Do whatever you want."

BEYOND DESIRE

"Thank you, Christoph."

Muller stopped in front of the desk. "I don't know how it's all going to end up," he said in a muffled, almost sobbing voice. "But I want to tell you I'm sorry for all that's happened. Perhaps some day we'll be friends again . . ."

After the Mayor had slipped out, Felix closed the door and returned to his desk. Well, he thought, leaning back in his chair, it had come at last. This was the end. This time there was no doubt, no hesitation. He must give up. Tomorrow he would write his resignation—

With a start he glanced over his shoulder and saw Cécile rushing into the room.

"I want to see it," she said. Before he could speak she was bending over the crimson gash. "Felix, I want you to resign," she said, straightening up, "or this thing will kill us both."

"Yes, darling. Tomorrow . . . I wish you hadn't come," he said, hurrying to the wall and snatching his hat and cape from the hanger. "I told you I—"

He froze in mid motion as a rumble of voices rose from the square below. "Oh, my God!"

"What's that?"

"Nothing. Let's go."

But already she was fleeing to the window. She had just time to get a glimpse of a mob gathering downstairs and Tanzen reaching for his whip. "Who are those people?"

Roughly he jerked her away from the window. "Come on," he said, pulling her by the wrist. "You go down the back and wait at the rear gate. They can't collect there, the street is too narrow. We'll come and fetch you."

"I won't."

"Do as I say."

"I want to go down with you."

She spoke with the senseless, unshakable defiance of a child. For a second or two his jaws clenched in anger and he thought he was going to strike her. She cowered and nestled against him. "Please, I want to go with you."

PIERRE LA MURE

"You can't," he flung impatiently. "Don't you see—"

"Please! Remember Dresden, darling? For better or for worse."

Nothing he could say would make her change her mind. "All right, Cécile. Hold on to my arm."

They walked in silence through the deserted corridor. He flung open the entrance door, and for a moment they stood side by side in full view. Her hand was trembling on his arm but her face showed no fear. Her appearance created a commotion. They hadn't expected to see her. Her beauty bemused them, made them forget their purpose. They gaped at her, not knowing what to do as she walked slowly down the wide stairs leaning on Felix's arm. Inadvertently a man raised his hat as they passed by.

The spell broke as soon as they disappeared into the carriage. Grimacing faces pressed against the windows. A lanky, bristly-faced man held the champing horses by their bits. Tannen leaned forward and with an angler's gesture unfurled his whip. The man loosened his grip and let out a howl of pain. With flaring nostrils and charging hooves the horses strained in the harness and plunged into the crowd. In less than a minute the brougham was halfway down the square.

"Felix, let's go away," she said, looking at the yelling mob out of the rear window. "I'm afraid."

He took her limp cold hand. "You are a brave girl, Cécile. By the end of the week we'll be on our way. Tomorrow at the rehearsal I'll disband the singers."

He spoke quietly, but she was not deceived by his calm. It was an admission of defeat, the end of his hopes.

"I am so sorry," she whispered, pressing herself to him in a rush of compassion. "I so much wanted it to succeed for your sake. It meant so much to you. I just don't understand. I prayed so hard . . ."

Like a broken stem she toppled against his chest, limp with grief. He put his arm around her. And like this they drove back to the farm without speaking.

IX

Pastor Hagen ran his hand over his tired eyes and looked up at the paleness in the window that was dawn. The soul-searching night had not brought peace. In vain had he asked for reassurance that he had been right in doing what he had done. The reassurance had not come. Only the feeble testimony that he had meant well. To him, that wasn't enough. Only too well did he know that half the evil deeds in the history of the world had been committed by well-meaning people who had called their pride righteousness and their opinions God's justice. Now, in the stillness of his book-lined study, he raised his sleep-tormented eyes, begging for a moment of rest. As if in answer to this prayer, a merciful overwhelming lassitude engulfed his mind. He toppled forward on the open Bible and fell asleep, his head buried in his arms.

At that moment an old woman bundled in rags and bent over a pauper's stick was plodding through a vacant lot in the Saint Joseph district on her way to early Mass. She noticed something jutting out of the snow, stopped, looked again and let out a long piercing yell.

Nightcapped heads appeared in windows of the surrounding houses, shouting questions at the crone, who ignored them and went on yelping with the unabated shrillness of an alarm clock. Soon disgruntled figures, shivering in hastily donned robes, trickled out across the snowy field, intent on finding out what this unseemly racket was about. Before long a group of people, their teeth chattering from cold and horror, circled Katharina Pleck, who had finally stopped her howling and stood pointing down at a woman's hand that lay open skyward, frozen and flowerlike, in an agonized gesture of appeal. Someone more callous or daring or curious than the rest bent down, gave a swift push to the body lying on its side beneath a shroud of snow. The corpse tumbled lifelessly on its back, revealing,

PIERRE LA MURE

amidst a shuddering gasp of recognition, a bloody clod of broken flesh which, only a few hours ago, had been Magdalena Klupp's plump and vivacious face.

It was an hour later when Pastor Hagen responded to his servant's shaking. With a wrenching effort he lifted his head, forced open his gritty, bloodshot eyes upon Gottfried standing before the desk in a state of panting excitement.

"Your Reverence! Your Reverence!"

"What is it?" asked the pastor from the depth of his weariness.

In faltering words the sexton informed him that he had just returned from the milk shop where he had learned from agitated housewives that a woman had been murdered in the Saint Joseph district.

"It isn't His Lordship's mistress that's been killed. No, Your Reverence. But it is a friend of hers, Your Reverence. As bad as herself. An actress. A fallen creature, a daughter of Satan, a painted woman . . ."

The pastor listened to the ancient, maledictory epithets. Each one fell upon his ears with the sickening impact of a stone hurled at an unknown, defenseless woman. Was this the voice of Righteousness? The old Pharisees, righteous and hypocritical, had used those words. Now the new Pharisees, the Christian Pharisees used them, too. What had become of Christ's Law of Love and Charity? What had become of His example when He had shielded the adulteress with His mantle?

"Get the carriage ready," he said. "And please, hurry."

It was still early when the pastor's carriage stole noiselessly into the farm's courtyard, snowbound and deserted in the morning's stillness. It was Schmidt's wife who answered his timid knock on the door and led him to the office, where Felix was writing his resignation and announcing that he no longer intended to perform the Passion.

For an instant Pastor Hagen stood in the doorway. His face was ashen and he held the gold cross on his chest as if for support.

BEYOND DESIRE

"May I come in?" he asked with the humbleness of a wanderer begging shelter for one night.

Felix stared at him.

The tall tragic-faced churchman standing motionless on the threshold was a new man, reborn in grief and humility. The little vanities, the complacency, the unctuous pomposity had washed away. Only the godliness remained, glowing about him like an aura.

"I have come to tell you how sorry, how very sorry—"

His voice broke and he was unable to proceed. "Your Reverence," said Felix, rushing to him, "it is you who must forgive my behavior on the occasion of my visit to you." Gently he took his arm and led him to a chair. "Let us be friends."

In a tone hushed with grief the pastor told Felix about Magdalena's murder.

Felix remained silent, aghast at the news. Poor Magdalena Klupp, her wanderings had finally come to an end—in that vacant lot, on a snowy night. She had been warned and then beaten up, yet she had gone back, despite her fears, to plead once more with Olga and bring her to the farm to divert the cruel gossip about him, grant him a little respite . . .

"Who could do such a thing! . . ." he said at last.

The pastor shook his head disconsolately. "This morning I have seen the lowest in cowardly abjection and the ultimate in evil pride."

He then described the scene he had witnessed in the prison before coming to the farm. Magdalena's murderer, teeth chattering and wild-eyed from fear, confessing his crime, betraying Kruger's plan, shouting the names of his confederates in a rage of vindictiveness . . . And a moment later the scene, more harrowing still, when with the Mayor and the chief marshal he had entered Kruger's study and watched the crumbling of the man who had thought himself so powerful.

"It was horrible," he said, his voice still shaking. "But Magdalena Klupp has not died in vain, Herr Direktor. Her death has opened my eyes and brought the population back to its senses. Like myself, the people have at last seen the truth and under-

PIERRE LA MURE

stand the meaning of the cause for which you've endured so much and for which she has died. I, for one, want to do everything in my power to help you. Saint Thomas is open to you, Herr Mendelssohn. Its organ and its choirs are at your disposal. I shall also endeavor to bring you other choirs from neighboring towns."

Felix looked at him, not daring to believe his ears. His dream was coming true. Hundreds of trained singers ready to bring the Passion to life. The organ on which Johann Sebastian Bach himself had played . . . It was too grand, too wonderful, too much. The people wanted Felix to perform the Passion. His Reverence wanted him to perform the Passion with a really great orchestra, a splendid choir in Saint Thomas Church, for which it had been written. This would be the ceremony as he had dreamed it, the consecration of Johann Sebastian Bach worthy of his genius.

Epilogue

It was Palm Sunday and he was still alive. It really was Palm Sunday. That was the most astonishing of all. At times during the last six weeks it had seemed that it would never come. At others, that it was coming much too fast. And all the time it was on its way, just like any other day, neither fast nor slow, simply waiting for the hours, minutes, seconds of the previous days to tumble down into the ocean of spent time. Already this remarkable, unique Palm Sunday was moving, advancing with irresistible flowing force. By tonight it would have nearly rolled over the brink of the cataract and by midnight it would have dissolved into nothingness. Just another Sunday gone by. But not to him . . . To him it would never die simply because he would never forget it. It belonged to him. He would take it with him when he died.

Strange how important a single day could be in a man's life. Of course, it was ridiculous to start imagining things, seeing portents and secret meanings in the sequence of episodes that led to an important event in one's life. Just the same, ridiculous or not, it did look as if it had all been decided way, way back by some power, some sovereign force. Maybe God? . . . Anyway, by Someone Who might have said, "Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn . . . Now, let's see . . . He will be born in Hamburg in 1809, raised in Berlin by a wealthy, wonderful family. He will be a musician and write some superlative music—and some not so good. He will become very famous, marry one of the loveliest girls in Germany and have fine children. He will direct the Gewandhaus Orchestra, give the first performance of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, found and direct the Leipzig Conservatorium. But none of these things will be his main purpose in life, his reason for being on earth. His mission will be to perform a certain piece of old church music by an obscure eighteenth-century choirmaster named Johann Sebas-

PIERRE LA MURE

tian Bach. That's all. Nothing more will be expected of him. Others will take up from there . . ."

Whereupon some Invisible Hand had gone to work and arranged it all. But so skillfully, so deviously that no one could possibly have guessed what it meant or where it would lead. For instance, what if old Herr Zelter hadn't found those last four pages in some second-hand music store? . . . What if he hadn't been his music teacher? After all, there were other music teachers in Berlin . . . If—if—You could go on like this indefinitely up to the moment when Pastor Hagen had come into his office at the farm, ashen-faced, holding his gold cross . . . It was like a slowly unfolding fugue of people and events, each falling into its place, each fulfilling some definite purpose, bringing nearer the ultimate resolution.

He himself had done very little about it all, groping through a maze of conflicting emotions, stumbling along, wondering what it all meant, grasping the full meaning only very late . . . But the Hand had kept him on the path and prodded him along. And he had been the chosen one. And for this he thanked God. Thanked Him for allotting him this noble task, offering him—a musician—the chance to render a great service to the master of all musicians. And finally, for granting him—born in another faith—the honor of returning to Christians their greatest music. This amply justified whatever it had cost—the struggle, the discouragements, the back-breaking strain of those last weeks. For this it had been worth living.

So much had happened in the last six weeks that nothing had left a deep imprint on his mind. To him it was a swirling blur of rows of singers with mouths open watching him for signals, instruments in motion, rappings of baton on the edge of the music desk, orders given, Schmidt rushing about, dinners dispatched in haste, Cécile looking at him with a mixture of pride and anguish, wondering how much longer he would bear the strain . . .

A sort of collective fever had descended upon the town. Everyone had tried to make amends. One who had genuinely made

BEYOND DESIRE

amends was Pastor Hagen. Without hesitation he had suspended the school's curriculum so that the Saint Thomas boys could be trained intensively. He had granted permission to use the church's great organ at any hour, day or night. He had allowed orchestral rehearsals in church. He had brought several vocal ensembles from neighboring towns. No man could have done more. And a measure of peace had returned to him. Not the complacency of the self-righteous, but the humble, tremulous peace of the penitent fulfilling his penance.

But the strangest of all was that everything had begun with Magdalena's murder. Why should the murder of a middle-aged provincial actress rock a city like Leipzig? Shatter a churchman's complacency and lead him into the path of humble charity? One could not fathom such things. Perhaps that's why it was written that God moved in mysterious ways.

His hands spread over the organ keyboards, he gave a last look at the orchestra, the soloists, the masses of singers, eager and orderly, all looking at him, waiting for his signal. He spied Hermann Schmidt, flute in hand, Tanzen, towering among the men's choir. The sopranos had a fine new leader, but somehow Magdalena had waved her off and taken her place . . .

He gave the signal.

In waves of grief the opening chords of the Passion flowed through the church. Slowly it swelled in a steady, throbbing crescendo. Then on an upward sweep it burst through the Saint Thomas nave, and like an eagle taking flight, the immortal music soared into the blue, higher and still higher, beyond the pointed spire into the Infinite.

Six weeks after that Palm Sunday—on May 17, 1847—Felix Mendelssohn received the news that his sister Fanny had died suddenly while playing the piano; he fell to the floor in a faint and remained unconscious for hours.

He never fully recovered from that shock. When he was well enough to travel, he took Cécile and the children to Switzer-

PIERRE LA MURE

land, where he spent the summer, trying to regain his strength. A daguerreotype of him exists—the only one ever made of him—showing him as he looked then, standing in his long cape, his handsome face hollowed and lined by illness and overwork.

The Mendelssohns returned to Leipzig in the fall, and Felix's health grew steadily worse. On the night of November 4th, at the age of thirty-eight, he died in Cécile's arms—six months after the death of his sister. What illness they had would be difficult to say with assurance, but some authorities have asserted, on the basis of the evidence, that both Felix and Fanny died from cerebral hemorrhages.

Cécile devoted the rest of her life to the children, but she lived for less than six years after Felix's death. She died on September 25, 1853, at the age of thirty-six.

Some lives leave a deep and lasting impression on the world, and Felix Mendelssohn's was such a life. Immediately after his death a movement was originated to set up a musical scholarship fund in his memory. In London a committee was formed with Sir George Smart as chairman and Karl Klingemann as secretary. With the generous assistance of Jenny Lind the necessary funds were raised, and the first promising composer to be awarded the Mendelssohn Scholarship was Arthur S. Sullivan.

The impetus given by Mendelssohn to the recognition of Johann Sebastian Bach's towering genius was decisive. No greater service was ever rendered by one artist to another. Much of Bach's work has not yet been found; more than one hundred of the cantatas he is known to have written are still missing. But Mendelssohn's performance, after nearly one hundred years of neglect, of the immortal Saint Matthew Passion, and the subsequent search for Bach's manuscripts, have already brought the humble choirmaster to the place in music which is rightfully his—the highest.

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

A JOURNEY IN THE JUST GONE PAST

BY

Stephen Longstreet

WITH LINE DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR



AN ABRIDGEMENT

The Author

STEPHEN LONGSTREET's widely diversified career as artist, author, critic and playwright has included writing and drawing for such magazines as *The New Yorker*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's* and the publication of several novels, among them *The Pedlocks* and *The Lion at Morning*. He has been active on the editorial staff of *Time* and *Saturday Review* and in the production of plays (*High Button Shoes*) and motion pictures (*The Jolson Story*). His paintings are in most of the great collections here and in Europe. Mr. and Mrs. Longstreet live in Beverly Hill, California, with their two children.

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T—Stephen Longstreet

Published by Simon and Schuster, Inc.

© 1956 by Stephen Longstreet



GRAMP WHEN I KNEW HIM

THE GASOLINE CAR

IT WAS IN 1919 THAT GRAMP BOUGHT THE CAR. MR. Woodrow Wilson had just ended wars forever, and Gramp came home to lower Fifth Avenue one spring day and banged his cane against the bronze Chinese gong in the hallway. "I've done it. I bought a motorcar!"

"They explode," said Mamma, coming down the teak staircase in her best hat, me at her tiny heels.

"Just had my first lesson. Destroyed a tree and part of a garden wall, but I tell you this is the age of speed. Did twenty-two miles an hour."

Uncle Willie was living with us then; he was between colleges. "Why don't you get a Stutz Bearcat; they're really something."

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

Gramp scowled. "Nobody is going to get me to lay down on my back to drive a car." The Bearcat was a low car.

Mamma asked, "Did it cost much?"

Gramp grinned and beat me playfully on the rear with the flat of his gold cigar case. "I've sold the horses, sold the carriage. We travel in style from now on."

"Not I," said Mamma.

Gramp winked at me. "I'm going to California by car, Stevie. I'm taking you; room for one more and the baggage. You always wanted to visit relatives in St. Louie, Sari."

Mamma perked up and smiled her best smile. "Can't we go by train?"

"Didn't we just whip the damn Germans, save the French and English, bury the Czar? It's the twentieth century, gal," Gramp said.

I said, "One nine, one nine, nineteen-nineteen."

Mamma gave in with grace; she had a new fur coat—a gift from Gramp—and she wanted to test it on the eyes of the relatives in St. Louie (we never said St. Louis—always St. Louie). She said, "It sounds reasonable."

The next morning there was the sound of braying in front of the house and I ran out onto Fifth Avenue, buttoning as I went, and there in front of the white marble stepping stone labeled LONGSTREET was a shiny, square motorcar. It was black and solid looking and stood like a barn. Behind the wheel sat a man wrapped in a brown linen duster, with a cap on backward, and huge goggles strapped across a big nose. A cigar smoldered and spat fire, and the figure pumped the hand horn, and the mooing sound came out of iron lips and filled the street. The Ford car of the period was a product to dazzle the eye and numb the mind of a twelve-year-old boy.

Gramp (the driver was Gramp in his motoring costume) shouted, "Jump in and we'll try the neighborhood fences."

I climbed in, and cars were high in those days. ("On a clear day, Stevie, you can see Sandy Hook from up here.") I sat

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

down by Gramp's side and he let down the brake, did something with a gas lever (no foot feed in those cars), did a short tap dance on some piano levers set on the car boards, and the car shook, gasped and moaned, and began to smoke. Then we moved, moved quickly, eating up the street at fifteen miles an hour, twenty, and when we hit Mr. Montgomery's Sanitary Fresh Mountain Ice wagon we were doing thirty, but the brakes gripped at last. (It cost us ten dollars for the ice, and five dollars to repaint the car's fender.)

Gramp limped a little at dinner that night, and I had a black eye where I had hit the dashboard, but no one noticed it because Gramp was in a growling mood. The sons and the daughters-in-law and the small fry not too damp to eat in the children's room all sat and waited for Gramp to thank God for the roast beef, the clear soup, the baked whitefish, the stewed meatballs in sweet-and-sour sauce, the watercress salad and the spiced peaches, the apple pie as big as a wagon wheel, and the heavy cups of very black coffee. It was an ordinary meal for a family at home *without* company. Real eating called for the Spode china, the handmade silver service, the soup tureen of rare Ming, filet mignon Clemenceau, oysters, and Crêpes Suzette Longstreet (Gramp's way of burning sugar in the sauce).

Gramp looked up and rubbed his hurt leg. "I'm leaving for California in two weeks. On the way I'm inspecting my copper holdings in Butte. I'm taking Sari and Stevie. No one is to do any business until I get back, and, Henry, get me a thousand dollars in ten-dollar bills from the firm for the trip."

Papa sighed. "Now, Father, you know things are bad, a post-war depression."

"Get it, Henry," said Gramp. "And, Willie, I want six bottles of good brandy."

"Papa, you know America has given up drinking. It's against the law."

"Bootleggers. You wouldn't buy from them, Gramp," Mamma said.

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

"Wouldn't I?" (Gramp became the first scofflaw in our family.)

Papa and Uncle Willie loaded the car the night before we left, and we named her "Emma" after a departed cook who always got overheated when we had company and used to put her head in the icebox to cool off.

In the morning, we had a big breakfast, everyone present. Papa pale, but controlled. The car was ready out front. The bootleg whisky went on the floor boards; over this went Mamma's trunks and Gramp's bags and mine. On the running board (dear departed running boards) were clamped a folding steel camp stove, a small icebox, and three steel cans marked: *Water*, *Gas* and *Oil*. There was also a folding tent and an oil lamp—a red railroad oil light in case the headlights failed us. We put up the canvas top, a "one-man top" it was called as it took one man for *each* corner. But at last we were ready. Gramp at the wheel, a gleam in his goggles, the usual cigar held by its neck in his strong teeth. Me at his side, seated on a sack of onions—Gramp was going to camp and eat out a lot. In the back on the buffalo robes and luggage Mamma sat, small but game, her second best hat on her best hair-do, waving weakly to the family on the red stone steps of the house. Papa sniffed back a tear.

"Henry!" Gramp shouted.

Papa took the car crank and Gramp figured on the spark and gas levers and nodded. Papa spun the car crank. Nothing. Papa spun again, the car howled, the body shook, and Papa landed five feet away, but on his feet holding his arm tenderly to his chest as if it were of great value. Everybody shouted "Good-by!" Mamma turned a shade lighter and greener and waved back, the car jack-rabbed down the block and then went on, headed for the downtown ferry station. It was ten o'clock and (an old journal of Gramp's gives me the date) April 18, 1919.

Steering only right, unless we couldn't help it, we made the

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

ferry station and got on board the boat behind a pair of big brewery horses. "A good omen," Gramp said. Mamma had a little "*mal de mare*," as she called it in high-school French, but Gramp held her head while I held a horse, and we landed in New Jersey. We headed south, past Newark, the slaughter-houses smelling.

"Where," asked Mamma, "are we heading for?"

"I'm hungry," I said.

Gramp grinned. "All stomach. We're heading for the Red Lion Inn, near Trenton. Great place."

"Trenton?" said Mamma as if she were saying a dirty word. "Isn't that the place they have the electric chair?"

We lost Trenton a few times and met some cows that may have been amazed at Gramp's command of language. At last we saw a low brown barn of a place and outside it a big red sign with a golden lion rampant on it and the letters: YE OLDE RED LION INN.

We drove up, Emma snorting in tired glee, her front end steaming. We stopped and Mamma said she had to "collect herself." Gramp leaped down and hammered on the big oak door until it opened and a large old man with one low eyelid came out and shook his head.

"Hain't opened for the season yet."

"Kimmil, my daughter-in-law and grandson, Sari and Stevie."

"Pleased to meet up with you. Come in and I'll roust out the cook and get some food out of the spring house."

The Red Lion was very interesting inside if you liked elk horns, wolf skins, wagon wheels, old guns, cobblestone fireplaces, pictures of old circuses, Civil War people, and dead fish with glass eyes in cases. Americana was already a fad.

First Mr. Kimmil (Major Kimmil, Bull Run, Gettysburg, and Cold Harbor with Gramp) brought up two bottles of wine.

Gramp opened a bottle and poured. He was very tired. I had two drops in a big glass of water. By this time two colored boys had set a table, and a chicken broth with rice was steam-

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

ing and we attacked it. Except for eating a pepper gherkin which I shouldn't have and Mamma getting a caraway seed stuck between her beautiful little teeth, the dinner went well, finished off with an Austrian *Gebäck* pastry that Mr. Kimmil had taught the colored boys to make.

There wasn't much use trying to stay awake after eating, and Mamma and I retired into our room, the one with the stuffed wildcat (with real teeth) on the wall, and downstairs we could hear Gramp and Mr. Kimmil over the Munich *Bier* refighting Little Round Top and talking about how the dead piled up in the peach orchard so long ago.

Morning came cold and too early, and Mamma washed us both in bottled mineral water and I remember we all had breakfast. When we were finished and Gramp and Mr. Kimmil had exchanged a last round of brandies, we went out and had relays of colored boys work on the cranking of the car into life. It took twenty minutes and only worked after Gramp jacked up a back wheel (an early starting trick of the Model-T days), and we were off.

We drove in the direction of Philadelphia, and Mamma moaned and kept her feet on two hot bricks wrapped in a blanket. I had out my air rifle and banged away at fence posts and Bull Durham posters: a sign, by the way, of a well-hung bull stallion that was the pride of any farmer who could get it on his barn wall.

"Let's find the Delaware River," said Gramp. "If Washington could, so can we."

"What does it look like?" I asked.

"Like water, acres of it."

We found the river at last and a ferry to carry us across, and on the other side was Philadelphia, all right, but the car had a flat tire. We found a Philadelphia nail in the inner tube. Gramp patched it and pressed it tight from a smelly tube of rubber repair parts and we got it on and pumped full and Gramp was

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

so mad he decided to head right for Gettysburg and see the old battlefield.

We got to Gettysburg late in the afternoon and stopped the car on a high ridge. Gramp—limping slightly—got out and shouldered his cane like a gun and looked across at another ridge. He was grim-faced, and I think was sniffing back a tear.

“Here I was on the ridge here, looking down and across. Fifty thousand butternut rebels hell-for-leather, firing, firing; down there are the peach orchards. And Meade rides up and he says, ‘Who the devil is in those goddamned peach orchards?’ . . . ‘Rebels,’ I say. . . . ‘Git ’em out,’ he yells. . . . ‘Yes, sir,’ I say, and I wave my sword—captain I was then—and I started running and the boys dismounted and started running after me, and it’s bayonets in the peach orchard and the second day at Gettysburg. . . .” He sat down and wiped his face and cried unashamed.

An old man with a cap labeled *Guide* came up to us. Gramp waved him off. “Don’t need a guide. Fought on this Yankee ridge myself.”

The guide ate a corner off a square of eating chaw. “You musta fought a damn funny battle, mister. This is the rebel ridge. The Union one is over *there*.”

Gramp recovered his spirits and laughed, slapped the guide on the back, smiled, and handed him a cigar. “I mean it was Union after we took it. Well, let’s move on and find lodgings for the night.”

I never did find out if Gramp had mistaken the ridges, and Mamma said I wasn’t to ask Gramp about it again as old soldiers have a way of fading away into dreamlike states and not always remembering the full facts.



MAMMA'S 1919 HAT

GO WEST, OLD MAN

IT WAS SPRING ALL THE TIME THAT FIRST PART OF OUR trip. Spring when it was summer and spring when it was fall; I was young and Gramp was old and Mamma was very car sick. I remember it as spring, and there were always blowouts and no gas and unpaved highways and insects in the fields over the cooking Gramp did when we couldn't find a good place to eat.

We got to Washington—I was thrilled at the sight of it—in one of those hot wet evenings that Washington is famous for. We stayed at a big hotel whose name I no longer remember. It had big whirling fans in the ceiling, and chains attached to the fans once led off to a small steam engine that had been built in 1842.

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

Mamma was tired, so after dinner she went up to bed and Gramp and I went for a walk. The city was warm and dark and the heavy stone buildings were hidden in the dusk as we walked toward the White House. Gramp and I stood against the railing and peered in. He looked tired and grim.

"Washington was a fine country village in the Civil War days, Stevie. The streets smelling of the best horses, troops marching, and on the old chain bridge across the river, they used to pull up the planks at night so no one could cross over or get out of the city. A dirty, brave human war."

He stopped to light his cigar. "Life had a flavor then, Stevie. You were for the Union or against the Union, and *all* the women were beautiful. They still are, thank God for these old eyes, but they had a sway and a way, but you'll learn about that later for yourself. We marched down this street when Abe Lincoln lay dead in there in a big black coffin, and the drums were muffled and the horses had black ribbons on their bridles. It was a sad day and the people stood around and cried on the sidewalks. A big country was born that night. A bunch of farmers and city slickers and factory hands knew they were burying a great man and that they were growing up. Goddamn it, you listening, boy? I want you to remember all this."

"I'm listening, Gramp. Was it a hard war?"

"They are always hard wars if you're in there in the battle. Maybe not for some fat people, and Washington was full of fat cats in clover. But out there in Virginia mud, the fever and smoked bacon and the ground horse corn and the wormy hard-tack, it was hard. We all looked like smoked hams after the war and it took us years to get back to sleeping in beds and using forks and getting over chewing tobacco."

"Were you a brave soldier?"

"Hell, they didn't come no braver. I ate the army food, fired horse pistols made by contractors who never heard of steel, and I rode in the wilderness with Grant at twenty-four and my beard was black and long." He stopped and took my hand with



MAMMA'S 1919 HAT

GO WEST, OLD MAN

IT WAS SPRING ALL THE TIME THAT FIRST PART OF OUR trip. Spring when it was summer and spring when it was fall; I was young and Gramp was old and Mamma was very car sick. I remember it as spring, and there were always blowouts and no gas and unpaved highways and insects in the fields over the cooking Gramp did when we couldn't find a good place to eat.

We got to Washington—I was thrilled at the sight of it—in one of those hot wet evenings that Washington is famous for. We stayed at a big hotel whose name I no longer remember. It had big whirling fans in the ceiling, and chains attached to the fans once led off to a small steam engine that had been built in 1842.

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

Mamma was tired, so after dinner she went up to bed and Gramp and I went for a walk. The city was warm and dark and the heavy stone buildings were hidden in the dusk as we walked toward the White House. Gramp and I stood against the railing and peered in. He looked tired and grim.

"Washington was a fine country village in the Civil War days, Stevie. The streets smelling of the best horses, troops marching, and on the old chain bridge across the river, they used to pull up the planks at night so no one could cross over or get out of the city. A dirty, brave human war."

He stopped to light his cigar. "Life had a flavor then, Stevie. You were for the Union or against the Union, and *all* the women were beautiful. They still are, thank God for these old eyes, but they had a sway and a way, but you'll learn about that later for yourself. We marched down this street when Abe Lincoln lay dead in there in a big black coffin, and the drums were muffled and the horses had black ribbons on their bridles. It was a sad day and the people stood around and cried on the sidewalks. A big country was born that night. A bunch of farmers and city slickers and factory hands knew they were burying a great man and that they were growing up. Goddamn it, you listening, boy? I want you to remember all this."

"I'm listening, Gramp. Was it a hard war?"

"They are always hard wars if you're in there in the battle. Maybe not for some fat people, and Washington was full of fat cats in clover. But out there in Virginia mud, the fever and smoked bacon and the ground horse corn and the wormy hard-tack, it was hard. We all looked like smoked hams after the war and it took us years to get back to sleeping in beds and using forks and getting over chewing tobacco."

"Were you a brave soldier?"

"Hell, they didn't come no braver. I ate the army food, fired horse pistols made by contractors who never heard of steel, and I rode in the wilderness with Grant at twenty-four and my beard was black and long." He stopped and took my hand with

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

shaking fingers. "I was young, Stevie, young as a courting rooster and the juices in me were alive. Come on, it's time an old man was in bed snoring through a few remaining teeth. . . ."

Gramp's pity for himself and his wild youth happened about twice a year and we always expected it. And waited till he got over it. The next morning I found him in the hotel bar and he was already red in the face and touching bourbon. I respectfully stood aside and waited, knowing the old man always got out of his depressive periods with the aid of good whisky. He saw me and grinned, his head shaking a bit.

"Great day, huh?"

"Yes, Gramp. Can I have a drink?"

"Set one up for my grandson," Gramp said to the barman. "A slug of lemonade with a jigger of sugar . . ."

I was let down. "Can I smell your breath, Gramp?"

Gramp nodded and I inhaled good bourbon and sipped my lemonade.

"We're taking your mother to the Hungarian Embassy for lunch. Be sure she dresses to the nines and is curried and combed. A nice filly, Sari. Too good for your father. Poor Henry, he's a clod and will always be one. . . . He didn't get any of my red blood, just my baby blue eyes."

I went up to our rooms and gave Mamma her marching orders, and she said, "He's drunk!"

"He's high," I admitted, expressing myself in one of Uncle Willie's phrases. "He was very sad last night."

"The Hungarian Embassy? Are you sure we are invited?" "Yo istenim," I said, "*muderul bessailnee?*"

Mamma went pale. "Where did you learn that?"

"From Gramp. It's Hungarian; he learned it when he was building a railroad in Europe. He also taught me how to swear. *Ta nem yo bulund.* . . ."

Mamma cried a bit and said I would end up a drunkard like

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

(she was one of the first respectable married women to use lipstick). And being Mamma, began to enjoy the idea of having lunch at the Hungarian Embassy.

I remember the Embassy. It was just after the war and it wasn't really open yet, but some people, I think, were getting ready to open it up. It was a grand place, so full of china and pictures and gold doorknobs that it seemed to sink at least a foot extra into the ground. There were several other guests at a long table and the footmen did not have their knee pants and white wigs on, but it was very fancy. Gramp was still *high* and getting *higher*.

There was Danubian carp and Lake Balston fogas imported on ice via steamship from the Old World. I must admit I don't know if these Magyars had any Tokay that day but there was a strudel, I know, because I got a little ill from overeating. I remember I had the king of all bellyaches that night, and Gramp fell asleep after feeding me slugs of castor oil and orange juice, and it was a few days before we could travel. Gramp said his "old war wounds" were troubling him, and I wondered why he wore an ice pack on his head because he had no old war scars there. I lived on milk and crackers, and Gramp and I refought the last days before Richmond in 1865 in great detail.

Mamma came to my room in a new hat, with feathers on it, and Gramp said we were ready to move west. "Washington is certainly no place for civilized people. The pace is killing."

"And the whisky expensive," Mamma said crisply.

The Ford was in front of the hotel, and as Gramp tried to get behind the wheel Mamma shook her head and pushed him aside.

"I'm driving, Gramp; you're still a little, well, *full* of war-wound medicine."

Gramp couldn't make a scene in front of the hotel and I could see his head was still aching, so he moved over and Mamma got us under way with a series of jerks and jumps, and

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

"I didn't. I've just been watching you. I wasn't going to trust my life and the life of my innocent child to your Roman orgies and spreeds."

Gramp looked mad, got out a cigar, set it alight and refused to speak for fifty miles, until we had to get out and change a tire. Mamma walked me down the road and out of ear range as he cursed.

"I'm glad we're out of Washington, Baby Boy. It's a town I wouldn't care to live in. Promise me you'll never be in politics even if it means being President of the United States."

I promised. Several times I was tempted, but I never gave in. A boy's promise to his mother is pretty sacred.

Gramp was driving as we crossed over into Virginia, and the red mud roads bumped us and the dust of small towns covered us. It was warm, it was sunny, and Gramp held the steering wheel like death's other brother, and pulled the gas lever down until we hit a neck-breaking thirty miles an hour. Suddenly there was a blur of color in front of us, then a scattering of gay feathers, a loud lamenting crow of despair, and Gramp pulled up as a large shattered rooster staggered into a mad little dance, fell over on his back, his tattered stern feathers at half-mast.

Gramp walked over and picked the creature up by its now limp neck and looked it over in admiration.

"Two of these roosters used to lick a mule in the old days with U. S. Grant."

A large red-nosed man with a shotgun appeared from behind some apple trees and nodded politely to Gramp. He was chewing tobacco slowly.

"Passin' through?" he asked casually.

"Yes," said Gramp. "This hen just committed suicide."

"Nothin' to live for," said the fat man. "Ain't a hen, it's a rooster. What do you think that critter is worth?"

"No idea," said Gramp, lowering his victim and taking out

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

"Aigs from his harem, why I got people standin' in line to buy."

I looked at Gramp and looked at the shotgun, and somehow that scene has never left me. I remember every shadow, every sun-heated detail: Mamma stiff in the car, Gramp lighting the two cigars, the late departed harem boss resting like a dead English king on the ground. I even remember the deep fat-backed voice of the shotgun owner as he puffed his cigar alive.

"Wouldn't take a hundred dollars for that rooster."

Gramp said sternly, "Wouldn't give you a hundred. Wouldn't give you ten dollars. Give you five. In gold."

The fat man looked at his smoldering cigar end and said, "Pretty good ropes you smoke, Cunn'el. Five it is and two more cigars—*damn* good cheroots. Pardon me, Madame."

The gold changed hands. In those days there was still gold coin in the nation, and Gramp wore a big money belt with lots of big old-fashioned green bills and some clinking gold coins around his big stomach. Gramp sadly rebuttoned his belt.

The man with the shotgun said, "I'll give him a nice burial, Cunn'el. Only fittin', he was a real Don Jewonnee, rather futt than eat. Pardon me, Madame."

Gramp picked up the victim and shook his head. "I'll just take *my* bird along with me. He broke his neck banging into the front end of the car. A good clean way to go. No suffering."

The fat man unloaded his shotgun and pushed his two extra cigars into the barrels. "It's your rooster, Cunn'el. Nice to have met up with you."

He walked off among the apple trees singing "The Bonnie Blue Flag." Mamma said in her crisp small voice, used only at those moments when life became much too big for her, "I am *not* traveling with that cadaver."

"Now, Sari," said Gramp, slinging the body on board. "It's a long way to Richmond yet, and we'll have to camp out soon and I'm going to show you how to cook a hen U.S. Army style,

"Camp out?"

"Nothing between us and Richmond but Yankee-haters, squatters, and empty fields. Let's go."

We got the car going and drove along into the tall shadows of afternoon, Mamma sitting grimly in the back seat, not moving or glancing at the brightly colored little body on the floor boards. Around dusk we came to a huge field with forests on either side, and Gramp pulled up beside a small, swift stream and we made camp for the night. The three of us put up the one-man car top. Mamma would sleep in the back seat, and Gramp and I put up what was known as a pup tent. "Called a pup tent, Stevie," he told me, "because no self-respecting pup would sleep in it, only damn-fool people."

Mamma refused to pluck the feathers off the rooster, so Gramp built up a nice fire between some stones, got out the big iron pot, heated water, and stuffed the rooster in, feathers and all, and then pulled out the feathers, cleaned the pot, and set more water to boiling. Like a great doctor performing his favorite operation, he dissected the rooster, inspecting it and its anatomy with professional interest until Mamma said, "Gramp, it's not a patient. I'm getting real ill. I don't think I'll eat any of it."

"Nonsense," said Gramp. "I'm going to make a boiled soup and dinner General Custer style. We have any spices or onions, cloves, carrots, cabbage, or pepper, cinnamon, saffron? And some potatoes, a can of peas—and we still have beef left over from last night. No beef? Then smoked ham and the rest of the bacon."

"*What* are you making?" Mamma asked, looking ready to cry.

"Army boiled dinner. Toss all that stuff into the pot. No leeks, have we? Well, we'll do without. We also cut in some blood sausages. Well, we'll use the rest of the frankfurters. . . ."

"Can I stir?" I asked.

"I feel ill," said Mamma, sitting down on a large stone. "Real ill."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

Gramp said, "You need milk, udder-fresh milk. Stevie, you get the tin bucket and we'll go to the farmhouse up the road and get some milk for Sari. Just keep it stirring, Sari, till we get back. Work will take your mind off your illness."

Gramp and I went up the road and left Mamma weeping and retching and stirring. Thinking back, I can see how cruel we were to her, and how brave she was, but at the time I was only interested in finding out what udder milk was. I knew "mother's milk" was gin; Gramp's cook had told me that.

The farmer sold us a gallon of milk for a dime, and he let me try my hand at milking, but it wasn't a very well-trained hand and the cow tried to mash the top of my head in with a kick. The cow was much more a Yankee-hater than Jeff Davis, and I looked, I suppose, like young innocent Yankee meat to her.

When we got back to camp Mamma was asleep by the fire, wrapped in a blanket, the iron stirring spoon still gripped in her little hands like a protective weapon.

Gramp got out our tin camping plates, and he ladled up sections of rooster and the boiled dinner and woke Mamma. "Here, Sari, clap yourself around this. Stevie, here's a man's share for you. Let's all start together. You're in for a treat."

I took a section of rooster in my mouth and chewed. I chewed a long time and wondered why I was so tired. I looked at Mamma and she too was chewing. Gramp had his head down, then looked up and smiled. "Needs a little more flame."

Mamma said, "All hell-fire is what it needs," and began to weep. Gramp said it would be all right, and we got more wood and cooked the rooster again, but it seemed to grow tougher with the heat. After a while we just sat holding our aching jaws and feeling very hungry now, sipping milk. The pot on the fire bubbled and boiled and Gramp tried some of the rest of the stuff in the pot, but too much boiling had kind of boiled everything out of it.

Mamma was really angry now. "I wish I were dead."

That hungry night on a lonely Virginia road was rather a bad time for us. We almost turned back, but Mamma was game at

dawn and happy at noon, when we got to Richmond and stayed at the Orwells'.

The Orwells were old friends of Gramp's. Lunch was very good at their place. The usual fried ham and sweet potatoes and good apple pie and an okra soup. Gramp said something about "the South showing no imagination in its cooking, the same old ham and . . ." at which point he said "*Ouch!*" because Mamma on her second cut of pie had kicked him under the table. She was very happy with the same old Southern cooking.

The Orwells invited us to a big party at the Confederate Hall that evening, the shrine where the battle flags and paintings of the great generals of the Lost Cause were hung. The hall was a blaze of special lights and a lot of the best people (and some of the oldest too) were there. Mr. Orwell introduced Gramp as "a member of the well-known Longstreet family of New Orleans." Gramp wanted to protest he was a Yankee Longstreet, but Mamma gave him *that* look and he just snorted. "Damn hillbilly relatives, that's all they are."

A reporter came over and said to Gramp, "The inner shrine has paintings of Lee and all his staff. Genuine oil paintings."

Gramp said, "Standard Oil paintings. I've seen them."

The reporter said, "All but of General James Longstreet. He's hung in the hall."

Gramp snorted, "What! Damn it, my father and his father were cousins!"

Mamma said, "Now, Gramp, that's *their* problem."

The reporter said, "You see, the general took a job with the Union forces after the War between the States. He became a postmaster in the U. S. Post Office."

"An outrage," said Gramp, "hanging any Longstreet in the hall. Who is the hanging committee here? A good name for them, by the way."

It was a bad evening for the old man, and when we got back to the Orwells', I went up to his room to tuck him in, and he was lying there looking at the ceiling, very old, tired, and sad. I noticed how the skin hung loose on his jaws.

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

"There is fame for you, Stevie, hung in the hall with the old overshoes and the topcoats. And why? Because he had to earn a dollar and went to work for it. 'Old Pete' Longstreet, we used to call him, biggest beard you ever saw and a pretty fair general, and this is his reward. It makes you think, Stevie. I'm certainly glad I was never anything higher than a major."

"It worries you, Gramp?"

"It certainly does."

"Why?" I asked.

But by that time he was snoring slightly and I let him sleep and went to my own room. There was an item in the paper the next day. "The Martin Orwells were entertaining Major S. H. Longstreet and his daughter-in-law and her son. The Major has an interesting business history. . . ."

Mamma managed to hide it from Gramp, and after a breakfast of bacon, steaks, pickles, fried eggs, and real coffee, we all started off again—heading west now, hunting the big rivers. Mamma drove part of the way and the stray dogs seemed to know it; they were careful to step aside quickly when they came out to bite our tires.

Around noon we stopped for lunch at a battered old white house and had a lunch that started off badly when the large, limping colored man said, "Today is our chicken day—the specials of the house, yes sur, chicken."

"No, thank you," said Mamma.

"Fried, stuffed with rice, sliced in wine sauce, chicken pot-pie with spices and candied crab apple, chicken patties, and——"

Gramp said grimly, "The lady said *no*. Goddamn all chickens!"

"The prime delight of our menu, yes sur, chicken à la king with tender baby peas——"

Gramp rose and said, "*No chicken!*"

We had fried catfish that tasted of river mud and boat oil.

dawn and happy at noon, when we got to Richmond and stayed at the Orwells'.

The Orwells were old friends of Gramp's. Lunch was very good at their place. The usual fried ham and sweet potatoes and good apple pie and an okra soup. Gramp said something about "the South showing no imagination in its cooking, the same old ham and . . ." at which point he said "*Ouch!*" because Mamma on her second cut of pie had kicked him under the table. She was very happy with the same old Southern cooking.

The Orwells invited us to a big party at the Confederate Hall that evening, the shrine where the battle flags and paintings of the great generals of the Lost Cause were hung. The hall was a blaze of special lights and a lot of the best people (and some of the oldest too) were there. Mr. Orwell introduced Gramp as "a member of the well-known Longstreet family of New Orleans." Gramp wanted to protest he was a Yankee Longstreet, but Mamma gave him *that* look and he just snorted. "Damn hillbilly relatives, that's all they are."

A reporter came over and said to Gramp, "The inner shrine has paintings of Lee and all his staff. Genuine oil paintings."

Gramp said, "Standard Oil paintings. I've seen them."

The reporter said, "All but of General James Longstreet. He's hung in the hall."

Gramp snorted, "What! Damn it, my father and his father were cousins!"

Mamma said, "Now, Gramp, that's *their* problem."

The reporter said, "You see, the general took a job with the Union forces after the War between the States. He became a postmaster in the U. S. Post Office."

"An outrage," said Gramp, "hanging any Longstreet in the hall. Who is the hanging committee here? A good name for them, by the way."

It was a bad evening for the old man, and when we got back to the Orwells', I went up to his room to tuck him in, and he was lying there looking at the ceiling, very old, tired, and sad. I noticed how the skin hung loose on his jowls.

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

"There is fame for you, Stevie, hung in the hall with the old overshoes and the topcoats. And why? Because he had to earn a dollar and went to work for it. 'Old Pete' Longstreet, we used to call him, biggest beard you ever saw and a pretty fair general, and this is his reward. It makes you think, Stevie. I'm certainly glad I was never anything higher than a major."

"It worries you, Gramp?"

"It certainly does."

"Why?" I asked.

But by that time he was snoring slightly and I let him sleep and went to my own room. There was an item in the paper the next day. "The Martin Orwells were entertaining Major S. H. Longstreet and his daughter-in-law and her son. The Major has an interesting business history. . . ."

Mamma managed to hide it from Gramp, and after a breakfast of bacon, steaks, pickles, fried eggs, and real coffee, we all started off again—heading west now, hunting the big rivers. Mamma drove part of the way and the stray dogs seemed to know it; they were careful to step aside quickly when they came out to bite our tires.

Around noon we stopped for lunch at a battered old white house and had a lunch that started off badly when the large, limping colored man said, "Today is our chicken day—the specials of the house, yes sur, chicken."

"No, thank you," said Mamma.

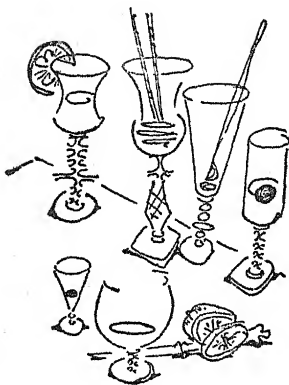
"Fried, stuffed with rice, sliced in wine sauce, chicken pot-pie with spices and candied crab apple, chicken patties, and——"

Gramp said grimly, "The lady said *no*. Goddamn all chickens!"

"The prime delight of our menu, yes sur, chicken à la king with tender baby peas——"

Gramp rose and said, "*No chicken!*"

We had fried catfish that tasted of river mud and boat oil.



KENTUCKY STILL LIFE

DOG DAYS AND KENTUCKY NIGHTS

THAT YEAR WAS A YEAR OF SUN AND DUST. MAMMA'S spine was a little unstrung from riding in the back, and Gramp almost lost half his mustache trying to crank life into the car on a back road; his mustache was caught in the crank. Gramp shot out a full series of purple curses, danced, and held his face. Mamma stuffed her fingers in my ears. After that, we were all hungry, tired, and dusty.

Mamma said, "We should stop for the night."

"Not till we get to Ohio. No decent food till we hit the river."

We got real lost just before dark, and Gramp got out under an apple tree and looked around him. "Well, you'd think the natives would put up signs for strangers."

"Can't they read themselves?" I asked.

Gramp looked at me and motioned me into the car, and we

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

went on and came to an old white bridge and crossed. It was warm and dusty in the hot night on the other side. Gramp put his cap on and said, "It's certainly cooler in Ohio."

Mamma, who was getting that hard look around her little mouth, said, "It must be even cooler in Hades." The road got worse, and the moon failed us, and far off a dog howled at something until someone kicked him. We could hear the kick, and then the talky dog stopped his monologue.

It was pretty bad in those days—the bad roads, the bad maps, the worse food, the far places, but the worst was the nighttime far from a town. It's an America that is gone now and I don't have too much nostalgia for it; only people who grew up in big cities and never saw the rural old days could collect wagon wheels and cobblers' benches and say, "*Those* were the days."

After a while, of course, the car ran out of gas and water, and one tire ran out of air. We stood on foot, Mamma gathering her clothes around her, and Gramp, his last match gone, chewed into the neck of a cold cigar.

Far ahead a light gleamed and we started toward it over a field laid out in young peach trees. We came to a barbed-wire fence and went through it. I lost the seat of my pants. Then we waded across a shallow creek, Gramp carrying Mamma and I carrying Gramp's gold watch—for some reason I now forget.

We were on a wide, wild-grown lawn, and beyond was a huge house, looking bone-white in the night. A pack of hound dogs ran toward us, scenting meat, I suppose, and Gramp swung his cane, shouting at the top of his lungs.

"Get back, you hounds of hell, get back! Hello there . . . damn it . . . hello!"

Some big doors were flung open in the white house and a voice said, "What yo' doin' out there?"

"Call off your dogs!" Gramp shouted, banging his cane down on a liver-colored hound's head.

"Git off, Nero, git off, Rufus, git off, Nellie, Cleo! Damn it, Pompey!" We saw a tall, thin man with a gun under his arm

drop-kick one of the dogs at least ten feet. The rest got back and sat down with their tongues out, waiting. Mamma had fainted and the tall man picked her up, gun and all, and carried her toward the house.

"Really sorry," the man said to Gramp, "but this isn't the kind of road many people use these days."

"What road?" asked Gramp.

Inside the house the tall man set Mamma down on a sofa and rubbed her hand. He was a handsome young man, and there were more dogs in the house, watching us with big dark eyes. Mamma opened her eyes and saw the dogs and said, "Oh, I wasn't dreaming. Dogs!"

"Gaylord is the name," said the young man. "This is Gaylord House."

"I get the connection," said Gramp, growling. "We're lost, and it's no way to treat strangers."

"I agree," said the young man. "Will yo' join me at dinner?"

The dining room was huge, the service fine, and the food—after all these years, I still remember it. The main course was *tournedos* of beef, an old family way of cooking it, the young man told us. His name was Dennis.

Mamma and I were very hungry and Gramp was always a good man with a plate of food. Dennis smiled at us.

"I'm sorry about the dogs but we raise them, yo' know. The Gaylord is a famous breed. Has been for hundreds of years in this state."

Gramp nodded. "The Ohio Gaylord, a fine hound," he said, kicking at a dog under his feet. "I know it well."

Dennis said, "Ohio? This is Kentucky, suh." I noticed a Southern tone suddenly in his voice and I looked up at the dueling pistols nailed to the wall.

"Kentucky?" said Gramp. "Damn, I was drifting south more than I thought. Must get that steering wheel fixed."

Mamma looked at Gramp as if she hadn't come with him and went on eating. When it came time to serve coffee, a tall, very pretty girl came in (with two dogs, naturally), and she

was wearing jodhpurs, those imported Indian riding pants. It was the first time I had ever seen any, and I found them amazing.

"My sister Dora," said Dennis, making the introductions. "She's been at a dog show. How did we do?"

"Lost," said Dora, throwing her dog whip into the corner. "They're importing their own judges, Dennis. We haven't a chance any more."

I don't remember much more that night. I slept in a big bed all alone, and I heard the dogs in the hall all night sporting a mouse hunt. In the morning we sent out for help to get our car in order, but something had snapped someplace and it would be some days before the local wagon smith could fix it. The Gaylords invited us to stay on and we did. They were fine people. Much too proud a sister and brother to marry with the decaying stock around them, they raised hounds, kept up the big white family house, and expected to be the last of their line. It was all rather run-down and a little foolish, but to a kid raised on mid-Victorian novels it seemed very romantic and exciting.

Next day Gramp was smoking his morning cigar when Dennis came out.

"Yo' know the points of a good dog, don't yo', Captain Longstreet?"

Gramp, who had not been expected to be hailed by a military title (even if he had spoken of his war efforts at dinner), nodded. "But certainly. They all have four legs, a tail more or less, and enough ears to hear with."

Dennis said, "Frankly, we're short of judges. And I'm on the committee, and I haven't been able to find a really good judge. Would yo', sir, like to judge in the hound class this afternoon at the club?"

Gramp was a sport. He nodded. "I'll judge. You can say I will judge and judge. . . ."

They shook hands and went inside to try some prime bourbon and branch water. By the time lunch came around they

were fairly glowing, and Gramp was explaining the kind of dogs Caesar had in Gaul and the breeding of lap dogs in London according to the shape of their noses.

Mamma and Dora went upstairs after lunch to wave each other's hair, and Gramp and Dennis and I went to the front lawn to pick up the winning team of three hounds Dennis was entering in the show. Dudley, Tez, and Mac were their names, I remember, and they looked just like any other set of three hounds. But Gramp and Dennis were very much pleased with them. I think anything would have pleased them. The bourbon had mellowed them neatly.

The club had once been a fox-hunting club, but someone had quoted Oscar Wilde about fox hunting being "the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable," and anyway the few remaining foxes got too wise for the dogs. So, Dennis told us, it became a dog and horse club. All the members raised dogs or horses, "or knew people who did."

A big table had been set up on the front lawn of the club, and while it was just then against the law to drink certain forms of stuff men swallow, they did have a nice odor of bourbon and rye whisky all over the place.

Gramp and Dennis did their duty here, and then Gramp went off with some red-faced characters with notebooks to judge some dogs. All the dogs and all the people loved each other, and when they saw anyone they knew they either barked or said, "Hi, Roger," "Good doggie, Eddie," or "Down, Mike." Gramp was in great form; at least he was doing a fine job of acting as if he knew dog life and its fine points. A large hound was standing in a dazed way in the sun, and Gramp went up to him and grabbed his tail and some skin under his neck and pulled; then he felt along the chest lines. Then he got down for an eye-level view (the eye level of a worm) and scouted the hound dog's angle shots. Then he rolled over almost like a garage mechanic rolling under an ailing car and studied the dog.

Everyone seemed very much impressed. "There never was

any judging like *this* before!" The dog seemed bored, then he looked at Gramp as if he were wondering if Gramp were another dog. Gramp got that look and I think for a moment felt a little foolish because he got up, dusted his knees, and said, "*This* is a dog."

People clapped their hands and some of the other judges came over and talked with Gramp and they agreed on something—that it *was* a dog. Mamma and Dora lowered their eyes when two Gaylord dogs got ribbons, but the Best of Show, and the Best in Class went to a big red dog with red eyes and a sensual leer.

On the way home Gramp said, "They outvoted me, Dennis. But your dogs should have won first. Frankly, the other judges were carpetbaggers, not real judges of dog flesh."

Dennis agreed but said a gentleman didn't care so much about winning; it was the breeding that mattered.

We left right after dinner, of which I can't remember a thing any more. I guess the day had worn me down to a mental nub.

We promised to come back real soon, but of course we never did go back. That's the sad part about traveling. You become fast friends so quickly and then it's all over. Dora kissed Mamma and kissed me, and Gramp handed out a cigar and shook hands with Dennis, who looked very handsome in white, his nose just a little red.

Our car was fixed and we piled in and drove off. Mamma held a ham, the bottles of gift bourbon were at her feet, and the hound dogs sat in the road as we pulled away.

That night we had a dreadful meal in a crossroads hotel; the next day we skipped breakfast and lunch, trying to reach a place where the food was fit for human stomachs. But it was two weeks before we really found anything worth eating. Places like the Gaylords' were rare, even if Gramp did have a Dan'l Boone skill in finding good living on the American highways. Food is still dreadful on our roadways, but in 1919 it was even worse. So you can understand why we remember with pleasure, and in great detail, when we had a fine meal.

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

Things got real bad in the food line, but I knew it was lowest at Cairo on the Ohio River, when we caught Mamma taking a slug of Gaylord bourbon.

"I'm sorry," said Mamma, wiping her mouth with dainty care and corking the bottle. "I could eat Tez on toast I'm so hungry."

I enjoyed the landscape, the wood-smoke-scented air, not being aware I was seeing a world that was soon going to be mistaking speed for progress. The roads were poor, but there was no great auto traffic. Trucks were still of normal size and the farmer usually drove a horse-drawn buggy, gig, buckboard, or work wagon. Garages, if they existed, were mostly old stables, and service and gasoline were cheaply held.

A country town would appear up a dusty road, the elms old and frayed by summer heat; there were still not many billboards, and those that existed advertised products now no longer around. Each town had a water tower, or pumped direct from the river.

The people were more ingrown, looked healthy, but often bored, and the American cowboy of legend, while already on the movie scene, was yet to become the great guitar-playing folk hero.

The hotels gave little service, the beds were wide, soft, and very old, the lobby smelled of tobacco juice, Sen-Sen, and the desk clerks' hair oil. You were let alone, you were neglected, and personal-carried ivory or gold toothpicks finished every meal. It was a world that had its faults, but they seemed errors, not big problems.

It began to rain that night. We came to a wide, dirty river in flood. We bogged down in mud. The river rose all around us. A wind came and the white caps danced. The river made clipped, nonosyllabic sounds. Suddenly, a last blowsy wafer of sun glanced madly about and went down; wind whirled, the whole river shouted in pelting hail. We sat, blind in a white vestibule.

Sleet or hail beat us and tore at our clothing. An island swam

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

toward us, rammed the low shore, and overhead the cottonwoods and river trees howled as the wind menaced their roots and made a polished expanse of baldness where there had once been grass. I shivered and stared.

We lay under the soggy car top, which was covered with mud. Water ran and mud followed. The whole world seemed in a rage, and never was there such wind. We sat in mud; timber whirled and pranced around us. Trees flew and birds lay on the ground. There was no sky, no land, but a lead torrent (like a dulled Venetian mirror at home, I decided) that moved in many directions and, when the hail stopped, the waters came down in fuller force. The water still rose around us.

Mamma said, "We've got to save the boy."

Gramp said, "We'll sit it out. A fool could die out there."

Night came. We sat and waited. Dawn came, a feeble mist against a sky that still poured water. We sat and shivered.

Noon passed and we chewed raw bacon strips and muddy fistfuls of dirty potato chips. Then the fury fell away, the thunder stopped behind the clouds. A draining of water rushed by us. We stirred and looked at the river and the gullies cut fresh in the land. Trees, houses, shivering hens passed on driftwood. The far shores came and went as mist parted and closed. A great sow, "impervious to decency and sanity," Gramp said, with chattering teeth, drifted ashore, half-buried in mud. She grunted and sneezed water out of her lungs and began to give birth to a huge litter of naked little pigs. Mamma began to shiver.

A whole barn came ashore and stood tall and wonderful and near us. Then something happened; the river touched some main beam, some secret cross truss, and the barn melted away with devilish witchcraft into a sudden collapsing pile of old lumber. Gramp shouted, and I cheered.

Gramp doused wet wood with gasoline. We cooked beans lukewarm and shoved them into our mouths while our teeth chattered rather than chewed. We slept locked together, trying to get a little warmth into our bodies. It was no use. We ran

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

paces in the mud. We sweated through exercises. The chill never left us. Debauched by effort, cross-eyed with fatigue, the cold dawn found us numb but healthy. Mamma was wonderful in drying our clothes out in sections. Gramp dried the car motor, spark plugs, and wires, and she started at last.

Three miles we fought the road, then swung over the remains of a horrible, chewed-up riverbank. It was twenty minutes before we could get on real high ground through the glue of mire and river silt and decay.

The next town, called Penny Crossing, had wisely built a hotel on the ridge of the hill, above the river. We were happy to get there, plastered with mud, dog-tired, and reeking of river muck. The car had courageously come through. We had been stuck in ditches, ruts, bogs, but with the aid of old barn timber and brush, Gramp's skill had kept us rolling.

In the hotel dozens of flood victims were stranded, lamenting and eating, weeping and shouting. Gramp managed to get us the billiard room, and the use of a bathroom with plenty of hot water. Then he took over the bridal suite, and here we relaxed.

We slept the whole next day, while our clothes were washed and dried, and Gramp, freshly barbered and excited, ran around getting news of roads and bridges ahead of us, while the local garage washed out our car, stripped mud from it, and took apart the engine and somehow got it together again. It ran better than ever. For years I thought this flood was bigger than the famous Deluge, but checking back in old newspapers I find only a few lines: *Flash Flood Hits River Farms.*

When the car was ready, Gramp put the question we had all been expecting. "Well, Sari, do we go on?"

Mamma folded her arms and made a humming sound of disdain. "Hmm, I can just see the family nodding and saying, 'We told you the g.d. fools would come back without finishing the trip.'"

"So?" said Gramp, inspecting a soggy cigar.

"Sail on," said Mamma, quoting part of a poem she had been teaching me.



AUNT GIGI OF ST. LOUIS

ST. LOUIE FAMILY

MAMMA HAD CLOSE RELATIVES IN ST. LOUIE; FAMILY rumor was that they had moved there with the invention of beer. This was not true. The Fosters were brewers of beer and bottlers of beer, and looked as if they drank a lot of it, but even I didn't think they invented it. Their motto was: *Wer a gelt hat, kann a Bier kaufen; wer keins hat, kann a Wasser saufen* (roughly: The fellow with money can buy beer; without it, he can guzzle water).

There were several sets of Fosters, but the main root, the big oaks, lived in a large red brick house that looked like a Rhine castle, with white marble steps and bay windows "as wide and protruding," Gramp said, "as the stomachs of the family."

We drove up to the castle and a large Swede housemaid let us in, and Gigi Foster came to greet Mamma and kiss her. She was

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

Mamma's aunt; Mamma's mother's sister, I got to understand after a while.

Aunt Gigi kissed Mamma. "Sari! It's good to see you. And *this* is Stephen?"

"Stevie," said Gramp. "Let's not get fancy. You look fine, Gigi; been living high off the keg?"

Aunt Gigi ignored that part of Gramp's introduction, and we all shook hands and Gigi phoned Uncle Peter, who was at the brew house, that they had company. Mamma was shown to her room, and she cried a little because she was staying on here while I went on in our car with Gramp to what we hoped would be California.

Uncle Peter was a little round man with waxed mustache and looked like a minor British general of some African war. He could strut sitting down and had a sporting eye.

"Sari," he said, kissing Mamma and gathering her in close, "that's a nice big boy you have there. He going into real estate like his father?"

Gramp swallowed a small cut glass of kummel and shook his head. "No. Hell, that's worse than being a great fiddle player. Stevie will be either an international bum or a professional baseball player."

Aunt Gigi said, "We don't use the word Hell here, or words *like* it."

Uncle Peter tried to look prim and failed and put his arm around Mamma.

Gramp said, low-voiced, as we marched into the dining room, "*How* do they manage to carry on a conversation cutting out the best words?"

Aunt Gigi and Uncle Peter had three sons and three daughters, and they all lived at the castle. There were some sons-in-law, some daughters-in-law, and some very fat yellow grandchildren who looked as if they had been weaned on beer. They were all seated around a long, heavy oak table as big as a skating rink. Three Swede hired girls served this grouping; Aunt

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

Gigi thought butlers sinful. The sons and daughters were overfed or perhaps over-beered; they were large and heavy and one could see they had lots of red blood in them. They puffed and panted and took on solid food with serious, silent faces.

We all got a dozen raw peppery oysters on the half shell and a special silver merry-go-round contained the sauces, juices, spices, and horse-radish that one bathed the oysters in. Uncle Peter had an extra half dozen and sucked juice from the shells. Then came lobster cocktails in small bowls, and we drank a white Rhine wine. Next, a huge silver coffin of piping hot turtle soup, very green, and floating on it were slices of lemon. It tasted of a good sherry, and the green turtle meat was cubed and just solid enough to give the full flavor of the turtle. Even the odor was hunger-filling. The family sweated and ate.

That ended the fish courses, the opening guns of the battle, while little silver wagons on little silver wheels were placed on the table by the hired girls. These contained rolls, buns, hot breads with little seeds imbedded in them, and there were china dishes of sweet country butter that never saw a store. It came from Uncle Peter's own farm.

Mamma and Gramp were looking at each other, watching the family teeth at work and listening to the gullets of the beer family at play among the food. No one talked much except Uncle Peter, who told us about the girlie shows in town and the size and color of the show girls. The soup came; it was a rice soup, the rice wrapped in cabbage leaves, stuffed with beef, veal, and pork and spices, stewed in the soup, a sort of St. Louie version of *golombki*. This was followed by guinea hen (which I called *genuine hen* for years, knowing no better) *en casserole sauce Albufeira*, served with noodles *polonaise*. Not a son or son-in-law dropped out. Their breathing grew labored.

It's hardly worth listing the rest of the meal. Apricot sauce and glacé, a *Le Milliard cherry flam*, and of course coffee in huge blue cups, a coffee powerful enough to wake the dead. *Mit* thick country cream. By this time the family was warm and glowing, breathing hard but game. Gramp looked at me,

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

I looked back and said I wanted to "unswallow," and Gramp said he would take me out. Mamma looked at us as if to say why didn't she think of *that*.

We were only staying a few days to get Mamma set with the relatives and then we, Gramp and I, were to go on. It was a good thing too. The family never let up on their eating. At dawn the buffet tables started steaming and boiling, and silver pots of tidbits, tongues, bacons, delicate animal organs, and dissected fish were all ready for breakfast. Everyone took a wagon-wheel-sized plate and moved back and forth from buffet and table between mounds of scrambled eggs, small ham steaks, and always that strong coffee to wash it all down. Lunch was a mere play, hasty attacks on chicken in the pot *Mallorouin*, big pies dripping their heavy berry blood on white plates, whole, angry-eyed fish planked and decorated with aspics and carrot carvings, some jugged eels, a whole flank of bloody roast beef, or a few ribs of lamb were followed by a big cheesecake and little cakes with pink icings.

Of course, it wasn't all eating. Uncle Peter was a man who also liked the theater.

After dinner he would pat his stomach (as if to say to it, *How good I am to you*) and look at Gramp. "New show in town, suppose we take it in?"

Mamma said, "Fine. I've been home all day helping Gigi unpack the winter silver."

Aunt Gigi shook her head. "Now, Sari, the women here don't go to the kind of shows Peter and his friends go to. Girlie shows, they're called."

"I don't mind," said Mamma brightly. "I'm a girlie."

Aunt Gigi made a small pious circle of her mouth, as if sucking a lemon. "I know, dear, *but* we are a family that doesn't like talk. To the men it doesn't matter. All men are . . ." and she went on telling Mamma what all men *are*. And how they couldn't help it.

I remember some of the shows Uncle Peter took us to. I guess

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

they felt I was a man. I was twelve, but perhaps we matured early in those days.

The shows' posters all read: "Direct from Broadway with the Original Cast!" But as Uncle Peter said he knew the girls in them, and had known them for years, the boast of the posters didn't ring true. The plots were all about losing somebody's garter and trying to get it back, or about being locked up in a Turkish bath on ladies' night, about two bedrooms with one door, about people who had mixed up their wife with somebody else, about wedding nights, honeymoons that somehow were always confused in long and short underwear. Very daring, I suppose, but except for the girls, who had shrill voices and thin lace nightgowns, and the comic maids in ruffled drawers, and drinking butlers and jokes about missing love letters, it didn't make much sense to me.

We used to go backstage and watch the girls make up, and Uncle Peter would pinch their chins and rumps and invite them to parties at his beer plant for his "sales conventions." He usually had one a month, after which Aunt Gigi wouldn't speak to him for a few days. I wasn't invited to a "sales convention," but Gramp was. I remember Mamma wanted to go but was told respectable women never went to Uncle Peter's sales conventions, and Mamma said, what the h——, living in St. Louie was like living in a g.d. nunnery. But she didn't say it where Aunt Gigi could hear it.

Uncle Peter hated bottled beer and refused to make it, and when bottles, a year or so later, came to cheapen beer and make it taste unlike the real barrel beer, he sold out to a big beer combine and slowly and skillfully ate his way to the grave. He and the family kept on eating, rolling to the health spas and baths of Europe, turning up in California or New Orleans, eating, drinking, laughing, giving to their charities, educating young women for careers in opera, founding a hospital here or there, and at last when the inner plumbing had had enough, and Uncle Peter was dead, everybody said he had never done an unkind thing to anyone in his life. Several ladies showed un

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

with children they said Uncle Peter had replenished the earth with, but his will took care of that. He had inserted a clause giving any such proven claims a thousand dollars.

As Mamma explained it to me back in St. Louie, "Baby Boy, it's a man's world, so you just be good and blow your nose often and don't let Gramp punish his *liver* (code words meaning don't let him drink too much) and write me every day."

I said, "Of course, Mamma," and I kissed her because I loved her very much, and because I would miss her when we left her in St. Louie.

Uncle Peter wanted to give us a big send-off, roast half a deer, plank a river fish on an oak door, or something like that, but Gramp begged off, rubbing his gall-bladder region.

"You see, Pete, we're not used to eating so much."

"It's nothing, old boy. Wish I had some marinated bear steak for you."

"Never mind; too old to digest bear."

Aunt Gigi said to Gramp, "Tell Peter we have a bear ham left in the springhouse on the farm." Aunt Gigi wasn't speaking to Uncle Peter. It seems he had given one of the girls in a show a pair of garters with small diamonds on them spelling out "Foster's Fine Rhine Beer and Lager," and the girl showed them every night on the stage on a pair of well-filled black silk stockings. Uncle Peter called it *advertising*, but Aunt Gigi called it—— But let's skip that; maybe she didn't mean it.

"Tell Gigi," Uncle Peter said, "we ate that bear ham last Thanksgiving." When they weren't speaking, they spoke across each other.

"Hmmm," said Aunt Gigi. "I'm sure I never ate a drop or shred of it, but I'm sure the girls at the St. Louie Fun House of All Nations did."

Uncle Peter threw up his hands as if to say what's the use. He did leave two bottles of Hennessy cognac in the car for Gramp. "Medicine," he said. "Take it for colds, chills, and damp. Never fails."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

Gramp agreed; said he preferred it to doctors. Mamma kissed us both, and we said we hoped she would have a good time. We had to go downtown to get some spark plugs and then to the express office to pick up a new tire being shipped out to us. And then off to California, with some Hennessy on our knee.

We were missing a big dinner and were happy about it. Uncle Peter said: "Minced lobster tails, baked ham *Jambon en croute*, Caucasian *shashlik*, and *pompano sauté meunière*."

As we drove downtown to get our spark plugs, Gramp said, "I kind of feel bad leaving Sari in that nest of heavy feeders."

"They're her relatives."

"That's no excuse."

We picked up the spark plugs and then crossed town to the express office to pick up our tire. And there in the express office, next to a crate of live ducks, stood Mamma, her packed bags at her feet!

"What the——," said Gramp. "Damn me, Sari, they throw you out?"

"I ran away," said Mamma, kissing me on top of the head. "I couldn't take it any more."

"What will they think?"

"I don't care. I'm coming along with you two. Move over."

Gramp grinned and lit the first cigar of the day. "Well, Sari, I can't say I blame you. I like fat women, but not as fat as you would have gotten there in a few weeks."

"Besides," said Mamma, "Aunt Gigi didn't believe in doing anything but retaining her social position."

"She's got a big one, too," said Gramp, winking, "a beaut."

"Uncle Peter helped me get away. He understands."

We got the tire and strapped it on and started west and kept going. Mamma was very happy and didn't say how much the car shook and how bad the gasoline smelled.

That night Mamma showed us Uncle Peter's last-minute parting gift to her, a pair of frilly garters with small diamonds, set with the letters "Foster's Fine Rhine Beer and Lager."



COOKIE, THE COWHAND COOK

ROLLING WEST

WHEN WE HIT THE FOOTHILLS OF THE ROCKIES, GRAMP ran the car into a tree and broke a front wheel, and we all put up at Running Horse Ranch till a new wheel could come from Denver over the mountains. Sheep were in the hills and the ranch yard was full of young animal life. Gramp polished a borrowed shotgun and spoke of game to shoot. Mamma, bored, put up a hammock on a cool, wide porch and read *Free Air* by Sinclair Lewis.

Summer was really here. The only creatures who did not mind the changes of season among the sweet fern and *Lechea* by the springs were the things built like shaggy nuts—the gilias, the horned toads, the darting, flame-colored lizards—all of whom, I saw as I explored, had heavy lids over reptile-slanted eyes and slits for nostrils and were colored to fade into the sun-painted landscape.

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

I learned to ride, to saddle up, to rig a horse. In the open near a rotting log there was often a rattlesnake sunning, and the horse would lean away from it. I would whip the horse past the rattler and ride on.

In the hills the sheep had been collected, the lambs tagged and gelded and their tails docked and touched with tar, and the heavy coats of wool were matted now with dried brush. Soon they would come down to the streams to be washed and dried and sheared by the Mexican shearers, who could, they told me, denude a sheep in three minutes while they held it between the toes of their *alpargatas*.

Life on the place excited me. The tick baths of vile-tasting creosote and soda and mixtures of darkness stood ready, and I helped push the calves in and they dipped down and for a moment the dip was a mad whirl of calf legs and frightened head. Then the calf walked up the ramp and into clean earth and air and stood there shaking off the strong odor that would not leave.

The replacement wheel for the car came and was put in place and Mamma finished the novel and we got ready to move on west. Mamma didn't like the roads along the Arkansas River as we dug into Colorado and headed for Pueblo and Pikes Peak. Gramp didn't like what they sold for gasoline in those days, and I was car-sick a great deal of the time but managed to get better for mealtimes. The pickings were slim: miners' flapjacks, white beans and salt pork, yeast-pot camp bread, and stuff they said was deer, calf, and chicken. Gramp said, "More like grandmother panther and petrified vulture."

The morning we hit Colorado Springs we were a sad lot. The hotel was rather grand, but its food was no better than anyplace in the West, which means it ran from poor to fair. Our beds were large and made of brass, and the clerk said Lillian Russell had once stayed in my bed. Gramp said that was one way to stay warm, and shouted that the prices were staggering. A first-class room at three dollars a night impressed Gramp as flaying alive.

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

In the morning we had flapjacks and good coffee (they once knew how to flap a jack in the West), and when we went out to the hotel yard, no Model-T! Emma, our brass-bound car darling, was missing.

A blacksmith was shoeing a gray mare in the yard, and Gramp went up to him and said, "Where have they moved my car?"

The mare and the blacksmith looked at Gramp, but only the blacksmith spoke. He spit out some of his eating tobacco and said, "Don't know, don't care."

"Damn it, man, that's an almost-new car."

"Now, horses can find their way back home. Cars got no horse sense."

"Neither have you."

The blacksmith lifted a horseshoe, red hot from the fire. They glared at each other, and Gramp left to find the police.

The police turned out to be one large man weighing three hundred pounds and carrying a silver badge labeled "Chief." There was no police force. They figured size counted, not number. Chief Ball, as I remember his name, looked over Gramp and Mamma and liked what he saw—in Mamma, anyway. Chief Ball was one of the handsomest men I had ever seen, not fat, just big, with a face "brown and beautiful," to quote Mamma, "with big, icy blue eyes." His mustache was a little long, but they wore them that way in those parts.

"Oh, dear," said Mamma, playing little girl, "where can our little ole car be?"

She flapped her eyelids a few times, and Gramp looked at me and I at him. It kind of made us sick to see how Chief Ball fell for it; but anything to get our car back.

"Ma'am," said the Chief, "rest easy. We'll get them car rustlers."

"Stranded!" said Mamma, fanning herself with a limp hand.

"Shucks, Ma'am, I've been stranded before; it isn't so bad. When Teddy Roosevelt and I were out hunting elk, we got snowed in for two weeks."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

"Dear Teddy," said Mamma. "I used to sit on his lap—when I was a little girl, of course."

Chief Ball almost got down on his knees. "You *know* Teddy!"

Mamma nodded, and they went off arm in arm to look for our car. Gramp lit a fragment of his last good cigar. "She never could resist a handsome face. And there's a lot of it here, twice-life-sized. Come on, let's find lunch someplace."

We found a place called The Hunt Club, a big log cabin filled with land examiners, railroad chiefs, timber crooks, ridge strippers, all of whom had made their pile, or claimed they had.

A large thin man with a gold tooth where it would show the best, introduced Gramp to the boys. "Great to have the General with us," he said. "Call me Chet, but *never* call me late for dinner!"

This killed them, and they laughed it up, showing they hadn't followed vaudeville jokes much.

Chet relaxed after the meal and opened his vest to give his stomach breathing room. "General," he said to Gramp, "this is real fancy camp truck, but wait until we get into the hills and get us a bear. Bear ham is something!"

"I know. I ate it once in the Black Hills," Gramp said.

"Why don't you and half-pint here come along? It's going to be a jim-dandy hunt. No womenfolk and a carload of prime ninety-proof Kentucky mouthwash."

"You're a kind man, Chet."

"You're heap big chief in my book, Chet, and game."

"Put her there!"

"It's a pleasure!"

The two strong men shook hands and refilled their glasses. They couldn't have been closer friends even if they were lovers. It was a delightful afternoon. We got back to the hotel at dusk, Gramp singing "Campfires on the Potomac" and "Don't Cheer, Boys, the Poor Devil Is Dying."

Mamma was dressing to go out, in her best net dress and the little golden shoes. I said, "Have they found the car yet?"

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

"Oh, the car," said Mamma, putting on perfume behind her ears.

"*What car!*" asked Gramp, sitting down, laughing.

"I'm going out with Chiefy," Mamma said. "Dinner at the Four Aces Club."

"Good girl," said Gramp. "Keep him looking."

"You think the car is at the Four Aces?" I asked.

"He's a fine man," said Mamma, wetting her eyebrows. "What a war record! He was up San Juan Hill two feet in front of Teddy himself. Cuba must have been dreadful."

"With Teddy grabbing the headlines, the rest suffered," said Gramp. "Stevie and I are going hunting in the morning."

"That's nice," said Mamma, putting on her pearls. "Don't let him eat anything to spoil his stomach."

"He'll eat anything that can't eat him."

Mamma was still sleeping the next morning when we left for the hunting field. Chet picked us up. He was driving a four-horse carryall and greeted Gramp with a crack of the long whip.

There were about ten hunters, and all had taken something in a glass against the morning cold. There were almost as many colored servants, plus a whole iron camp stove and a carload of food and bottled moisture to wet throats.

It was a delightful trip into the big timber. I sat by Chet, the driver, with Gramp swinging the whip. The horses flew, the timber grew rougher, and the high clear air was good to inhale and good to shout into.

At two in the afternoon we were mounted on pack horses and still going up. There we made camp, the servants built fires, and we sat up late eating. The men passed the cheer, and someone fired a double-barreled shotgun through a new tent. A hunter fell into an icy cold brook.

There were many versions of the Great Hunt in the family history, so I might as well tell the truth about it. At dawn two of the hunters were nursing a cold—nursing it tenderly on Kentucky dew. At noon one of the hunters was lightly shot in the

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

rump by another hunter. In the afternoon someone shot a skunk, and the skunk hit back before he died. We had to move camp in a hurry. The dogs scented a bear at three, and we all went running along a trail, me carrying a .22 rifle, a Savage that you couldn't dent a tin can with.

The dogs kept getting ahead and running through streams. Gramp and Chet and I were second; the dogs were always first in this race. The bear roared a few times, sounding like no bear I ever saw. We cornered it in a clearing, but it had cleverly dressed itself up as a brown and white cow. "Very clever of that bear," Gramp said later.

At dusk the result of the day's hunt was cooked up—mighty small showings: rabbits, two woodchucks, some real fine rainbow trout the servants had caught, and the rest of the meal came out of the supplies. The hunters came down to civilization the next day, everyone a little tired and with a bad taste in his mouth. "Too much protection against the cold," Gramp said.

Not long after, they found our stolen car in Denver. An Indian half-breed had taken it, and we got it back, battered but not in bad shape. Mamma was by now bored by Chiefy, and Gramp was what he called "sugaring-off elbow-bending." So it seemed only fair to go see Salt Lake City.

The roads were a mockery of the word *road*. The weather consisted of rain, but the car and its motor kept us floating, never let us down after Gramp had two bearded blacksmiths at the railroad yards hammer out a big hook which they bolted to the front end. After that if we sank into a mudhole, a rope tied to the hook and hitched to any two passing horses started us on our way again.

We wanted to cross the desert country before the full black of summer was upon us. Mamma was wondering if there were such a place as California.

"I don't see how the covered wagons made it," Mamma said, as we changed a tire on a mountain road.

"They ate well," said Gramp. "They ate one another."

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

"Are people good to eat?" I asked.

"Some," said Gramp. "Imagine Lillian Russell in a roasting pan. Meat's meat."

"Gramp!" said Mamma in her low, icy voice.

Gramp kicked the tire in place and said, "Of course *I'm* not much, just bones and old scar tissue, but, now you, Sari, or even Stevie here with an apple in his mouth . . ."

Mamma said, "Gramp, I'm putting you in Coventry."

"Now, Sari," said Gramp, knowing he had gone too far. "I was just teaching Stevie history, about the Donner party that got snowed in and lived off one another, and you, Stevie, you know . . ."

But I shook my head and pointed to my sealed lips. When Mamma put anyone into Coventry that meant no one talked to him until Mamma, like a Pope in skirts, withdrew the interdiction.

Gramp had been in Coventry twice on the trip, and he didn't like it. He liked to talk and be talked to. He lit a cigar, sighed, and pointed to the car. We got in and drove on in silence.

Mamma hummed a little tune, I made faces at my reflection in the windshield, and the car ran on over bad roads, past sod huts and ranch fences, ran on, making the only real sounds after Mamma had stopped humming the tune.

It was past noon, and I was hot, tired, and thirsty. I pointed to my mouth and swallowed. Mamma tapped Gramp's shoulder, pointed to her small mouth, and then drank an imaginary glass of water and swallowed in a ladylike fashion.

Gramp held one hand to his ear and said, "Eh? Speak louder."

Mamma folded her arms, scowled, and said to me. "If some people had any sense they'd know we're hungry."

Gramp said to his steering wheel, "If some stomachs could talk, they'd talk to an old man who never meant anyone any harm. But, of course, snobs and stylish people, they're too good to talk to the likes of me. I'm just old American stock, fought in the Civil War, raised up a family of sons, and now in my declining years I'm shoved aside, and who the hell cares!"

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

The last four words were shouted across the plains and frightened two steers who were rubbing themselves against a fence post.

"You win," said Mamma. "You're such a ham, Gramp. I bet you'll be bringing up a few tears next."

Gramp grinned. "Hell and high water, Sari, a man doesn't like to think he isn't fit to talk to!"

Mamma crossed her arms. "I withdraw Coventry."

"Can I talk, Mamma?" I asked.

"Yes, dear."

"Gramp, we dropped our spare tire about a mile back."

"Why didn't you yell out!"

"Coventry, you know."

"I'll break your damn little——"

"Gramp," said Mamma in her Coventry voice.

Gramp finished, "—little piggy bank and buy you some real cowboy boots."

Gramp turned the car around, and we went back and found the tire. Near it we saw a chuck wagon drawn up and some men outside it who didn't look at all like cowboys but more like hobos sitting around, smoking hand-rolled cigarettes while a cook filled tin coffee cups.

"How far to Salt Lake City?" asked Mamma.

"Oh," said a long cowboy (who looked the way Gary Cooper was going to look in a few years), "just about a hundred miles, more or less."

"Anyplace to eat around here?" Mamma tried out her Lord-I'm-just-a-poor-little-woman-alone-in-the-world smile. "It's been a long time since we've had solid food."

"Best place is right here. Come on over." And the cowboy held the strands of barbed wire apart for Mamma to crawl through. "And bring your friends. Plenty for all."

We followed him around to a small fire and met the cow hands (they're not called cowboys, but hands, I found out), and Stretch, as they called the tall one, yelled out, "Hey, Cookie, we got company."

Cookie was a wide, fat, dipped-in-some-soot-and-oil mixture,

part Mexican and part mustache. He came over with some frying pans and tin trays and set down his camp cooking before us. Cow hands eat well on the range—or did—or else we were lucky in finding a good outfit.

"I'm sorry," said Stretch. "We haven't butchered a steer, or we could have Cookie give us a mess of steaks."

"This will do fine," said Gramp, as his tin cup was refilled with cow-hand coffee, which experts claim is the best coffee in the world. "Cookie should get a medal."

We ate with cow hands a lot after that, every chance we got on the road, and some of them ate well and some badly. If they had a Mexican or colored cook, they ate well. But no damn-yankee could cook well for cow hands, and a cow hand would leave an outfit and drift around until he found the kind of grub he liked.

We thanked Cookie and Stretch, Gramp handed out his few remaining cigars, and we left the cow camp and headed toward Salt Lake City. We smelled the lake a long way off, then saw the great temple against the hot blue sky, and soon we were in the streets of Salt Lake City. Gramp made no jokes about Brigham Young and his twenty-four wives and six hundred children, except to say that a good wife is like an elephant, "very interesting to look at, but who wants to own one?"

"Gramp," said Mamma in that *cold* voice.

And Gramp replied, "I must buy some new cigars."

"After we settle at the hotel."

We found a very good hotel, with the biggest moose in the world (his head anyway) hanging over a big fireplace in the lobby, his big glass eyes looking down sadly at us as we registered, Gramp writing our names with a big pen in a fancy hand.

We went to buy some cigars, and Gramp found Salt Lake City didn't have any places that sold cigars: "Sorry, but the war, you know—didn't import many." Which shows you how old *that* excuse is, World War I, in 1919, being in the just-gone past.

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

"Hell and tiddlywinks," said Gramp, "the things they blame on wars."

The clerk took the gold toothpick from under his mustache and said, "Try that little shop next to the hotel. The elders of the church buy their smokes there. He may have some old stuff in stock."

"Thanks."

It was a dusty little shop, but it smelled neatly of Turkish blends and polished pipes. A little old man with a bright blue eye shook his head when Gramp asked for his favorite brand of cigars.

"The war?" Gramp asked.

"The war. And what I have, I have to keep for the elders of the church. That was a beautiful woman you had with you."

"Oh, Sari," said Gramp.

The little old man leaned over. "Sneaking in an extra wife?"

Gramp looked at the ceiling. "That isn't done any more, you know—at least publicly."

I started to say something, but Gramp gripped my arm and I think he trembled, the tobacco habit had him in such a grip. If there were any way of getting cigars, Gramp was going to get them.

The little old man winked. "A mighty beautiful and comely offering to the codes of the early saints, I must say. Getting married at once?"

"It is to be quite an event," said Gramp, "and I did want to pass out some good cigars. As you say, the custom of many fruitful unions is frowned upon; the good work of Smith and Young is going fast. Just two dozen cigars to pass out would have done it—the important elders, you know."

The little man nodded and climbed up over his shelves like a chimp and brought down a cedarwood box. "Two dozen Belindas, prime Havana leaf."

We went out, glowing, the box under Gramp's arm and a fresh cigar in the corner of his mouth. Gramp looked at me and winked. "It's a man's world, Stevie. Mum's the word. As a

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

famous man once said, 'A woman is only a woman, but——' ”

“A good cigar,” I finished, “is a smoke.”

It was a mistake for Gramp to warn me. I figured out that was what happened—that and three servings of ice cream. For when Mamma heard me muttering in my bed, she came to test my head for fever and to tuck me in, and she found me talking in my sleep about cigars and maidens.

We knew something was wrong the next morning at breakfast. We knew it was real wrong when we took off for the mountain passes. A few miles past the stinking lake Mamma said, “Coventry for the next three days, Gramp.”

Gramp, a good cigar in his mouth, asked, “But why?”

“Stevie talked in his sleep last night. So I’m your new young wife? And all your others are worn out.”

Gramp looked at me with distaste. “It wasn’t that bad at all. He built it up in his dirty little mind.”

Mamma put her arms around me. “Now, Baby Boy, you just show Mamma all the jack rabbits.”

“You like jack rabbits, Mamma?”

“A jack rabbit is only a jack rabbit, but a good cigar is a smoke,” she said.

Gramp inhaled his cigar carefully, flicked the ash off, and said, “Please don’t talk to me. I’ve just put *you* and Stevie into Coventry. Why didn’t I ever think of that before?”

Mamma looked at me, and I looked at Mamma, and I showed her the first jack rabbit, but she didn’t seem interested. . . .



THE OLD IRISH REBEL

THE HEAD OF A FISH

GRAMP WANTED TO GET IN A SIDE TRIP TO BUTTE, Montana, to see about the copper mine he had an interest in.

As we left one of the dreadful eating places and drove out of town, Mamma fanned herself and said, "What's so wonderful about the West?"

Gramp chewed on a last inch of cigar. "When you say that, gal—smile!"

"Let me know when you're witty," Mamma, dusty, hot, tired, and itchy, said, "and I'll laugh."

Gramp knew mutiny when he saw it. "Man alive, Sari, I don't want trouble with you. I'm a sick old man."

"What hurts, Gramp?" I asked. "Your head?"

Mamma said, "Now, Stevie, you know Gramp hasn't any *gout* medicine."

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

"Just that little bottle labeled Hair Oil," I started to say.

Gramp gave me the look the eleven other disciples used to throw at Judas. "Just a little bourbon I keep for when the gout is bad."

Mamma looked out at the heavy hot day, the tumbleweed, the grim, hard black hills, and sighed. "Not *again*, Gramp."

Gramp nodded and saw he had Mamma on the defensive. Gramp's gout was his only illness. He was tall as a house, strong as a mule, mostly as healthy as a redwood tree. But when his big toes began to send off sparks and an attack of gout was coming up, the family went away on visits, and those who had to stay wondered why they never built a storm cellar.

"Which toe?" I asked.

"Both, damn it," Gramp said. "I got up this morning and somebody was boiling lead inside them. Oh, I can hardly stand it. These shoes are killing my poor toes—the big ones, that is."

"Gramp," Mamma said, "you'd better stop before you hit that cow in the road."

Gramp pulled on the brakes, and there, facing us, was a skinny steer taking up all the road there was.

"It's a steer, Sari, *not* a cow," Gramp said, and shouted, "Shoo! Yale, ten, Harvard, aught! Three cheers for the United States Steel Company and Teddy Roosevelt! Damn you, get off the blasted road! *Git!*"

But the steer didn't move. Gramp got out of the car and took his shotgun along to scare the animal, but the steer just looked at Gramp as he took aim.

Mamma, suddenly amused, said, "It's killers like you, Gramp, that give the West a bad name."

"I'm only scaring it. I wouldn't harm a hair on its shaggy hide. Get along, little doggie! Newport, Palm Beach, Alexander's Ragtime Band! Get going!"

At which point the steer made a grave and fatal mistake. It stepped on Gramp's sore big toe. Gramp rose two feet into the air, screaming like a ghost in Dracula's castle. He spun around, cursed so hard Mamma covered my ears, and then, weeping pain and rage, Gramp murdered the steer in cold blood (even

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

if he did claim later, when taking on bourbon, that it had pulled a knife on him). Gramp, weeping and sputtering like a whale, staggered to the running board and sat down, nursing a large shoe.

"I've been had!" he shouted. "Oh, my aching toe!"

He pulled off his shoe and sock, and there was the most swollen and hottest-looking toe I'd ever seen.

"I'm dying, Sari, dying here in this vent-hole of Hell!" Gramp gasped, and hunted for the hair oil. Mamma leaned over, took the bottle from him, and spilled it all out in the sand.

"No drinking during an attack, Gramp. Doctor Wilkin said so."

Gramp turned away and hid his head in his arms; he couldn't bear to see whisky poured out on the ground. He was really in agony now. We got him into the back of the car, and Mamma drove while he moaned.

Around four o'clock in the afternoon we were someplace near Virginia City, and Gramp was turning blue-red. We saw a big stone ranch house ahead of us, and Mamma decided to go in there for help.

Hunting dogs reeling out tongues ran to meet us, and an iron Negro boy with an iron ring in his hand stood on a stone into which was cut the word *Beekman*. A man dressed like a cowboy playing a hobo came out to peer at us.

"Always welcome here. Jake Beekman is the name. How's the old man?"

"Dying," said Gramp. "I want to make a new will."

"Bring the old coot in," said Jake Beekman. "We'll make him comfortable. What you-all need is a snort of brandy."

Gramp moaned an actor's deep moan. Sari shook her head. "No drink!"

"Well, maybe a little dinner would do him some good. We got a pretty good Indian cook that Mamie—that's Mrs. Beekman—has been teaching French-style grub. Too bad she's in Frisco—Mamie likes company."

Poor Gramp. No more...

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

main room of the big ranch house, he wasn't even cheerful enough to greet the other guests. There were four of them, cattle buyers, and they were lots of fun. Gramp had a special meal Mamma had ordered for him.

He sighed as he spooned up crackers from his milk. "Two thousand miles of bad food: cast-iron ham, chicken stuffed with gravel, coffee brewed in cesspools, cheese made of stolen church candles, and bread baked of sawdust, and now when they put *real* food in front of me, I'm not permitted to eat it!"

"Gout," said Mamma to Jake Beekman. "City life, Gramp—all that flowering vice. Well, your big toes just about kill you."

"Gout," said Jake Beekman, "that's a habit, I hear, in England. I wish Mamie were here; she'd be pleased to know we have a real high-class case of gout at the ranch."

Jake Beekman had not only made money in cattle, oil, silver, power lines, railroads, and timber, he had also been active on the stock market. And his wife Mamie, he said, seemed ready to spend most of it turning the ranch into a part of Europe. Jake told us all this after dinner, as he smoked a rich cigar which Gramp had been forced to refuse. Gramp, cracker dust in his mustache, went sadly up to bed, so meek and mild I was really worried over him. Old age, I decided, is not very satisfying.

He was a little more cheerful the next morning as we left, and we promised to look up Mamie Beekman "in Frisco." Jake pumped our hands and the other guests told us good-by. Gramp smiled and said, "I'm feeling much better; a good night's sleep and no rich food—the simple life. I think we'll visit my copper mine. The simple life from now on."

"Yes," said Mamma. "All the way to the Coast and back. No more rich food for you, Gramp."

"How right you are, Sari," said Gramp, a subdued man. "The virtues of the plain life are best. The great Greeks like Plato lived on the head of a fish and a fistful of olives. I shall do the same."

And Gramp really seemed to accept the simple life. In Vir-

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

ginia City we found a good eating place run by three sisters who set a good frontier table. But Gramp just smiled and ordered corn flakes and milk.

This was a new Gramp, and we didn't know what to think. I later found out that Mamma's letters home admitted she was puzzled. Mamma was a fancy writer with a Hemingway kind of offbeat idea of life and its problems, although I don't think Hemingway ever got as close to life and its problems as Mamma did in her letters. She faced facts better than he did. Let me quote her from an old letter home:

"Odd. Gramp is again red of face and heavy of limb, but he's eating nothing much. He says he is clean and bright as a dime inside and out."

Again Mamma: "Gramp is living 'close to the skin,' as he said this morning. I suspect the old rip when he gets full of his kind of poetry, but he is so easy to live with now that he doesn't eat much. He doesn't drink, because I smell his breath when I lean over to kiss him in the morning. I'm worried—it can't last. He's been such a china-breaking bull for so long that this version of St. Francis mocking desire doesn't seem life-size."

One night in a hotel in Cody, Wyoming, Gramp had another gout attack, and Mamma, over his protests, called in a local doctor. The lean, dirty-fingered doctor pushed Gramp around, looked at his remarkably long tongue, and asked him to expose his stomach.

He looked at Gramp's navel and nodded.

"Cut out your fat feeding, Mr. Longstreet, cut down your alcohol intake, and I'd give up all the rich dressings. Eat only milk and crackers."

Mamma said softly, "You mean he *hasn't* been dieting?"

The doctor looked down at Gramp's big toes, both glowing like the red electric-light bulbs on the merry-go-round at Coney Island. "The toes show he's been stuffing himself. That will be one dollar as my fee; it's a night call and I had to come fifteen miles."

Gramp was trying unsuccessfully to say something fast. Mamma gave the doctor a silver dollar she'd won in Nevada, and after he'd gone she rolled up her sleeves. Gramp looked at her and said, "Now, Sari—"

Mamma paid no attention. "Stevie, get out that big leather bag."

"Now, Sari, a man's bag is his castle."

Mamma opened the bag and out fell a big smoked ham, the cloves still on its sugar-crisped fat; a whole side of corned beef, wrapped in Gramp's best linen motoring coat; a string of pork sausages; some crisply roasted chickens with wings missing; and a whole smoked salmon.

Mamma kicked small feet at this food dump. "So, food is a dreadful thing? So, filling one's inner plumbing is vulgar and a foul attack on the simple Greeks! You old two-faced German!" Mamma hated Germans all her life, so it was the worst thing she could call a human being. "You rancid old Prussian, trying to make fools of your own blood and kin, tearing your grave open with your own teeth, chewing the turf away from the family burial vault—and drinking, too! You Teutonic sensualist!"

Mamma dug deep in Gramp's bearskin coat and pulled out a big bottle with Russian letters and red and gold seals on it. "Vodka! The stuff that doesn't smell or have any color. So you've been drinking a lot of this good clean *water*, eh!"

"Sari, darling—"

Mamma threw the bottle out the window (the window wasn't open, but she threw it out anyway). Gramp stood up tall and calm on his aching toes. You had to admit the old man had his moments. "All right, you win. But just remember, young woman, I'm still the head of this family. You can't talk that way to me in front of the young fry. Respect, damn it! Life without respect and dignity isn't worth living!"

"Then admit what a dirty old man you are."

"I am a sinner," said Gramp, dead-pan. "A deep and hard old sinner. My heart is like leather, and my mind is silted over with almost a century of evil. Now, damn it, let's forget this

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

farce. They serve a fine roast beef here, and I'm buying the wine. Maxim's Chambertin, 1902."

Mamma knew when she had rubbed someone's nose in it enough. She said, "I'd like a Montrachet, not too sweet, to cut the travel dust. And don't let me hear from your g.d. big toes again."

Gramp nodded and put on his good high button shoes, and if the shoes hurt, if his big toes screamed, I don't know, because he was a very brave old man, and Mamma was the most beautiful thing in the world. We went down to dinner a respectable and well-fed American family.

Mamma had the last word. She looked over the ornate hotel menu and said to the waiter, "I see you don't have any fish heads or olive pits. Gramp, you may order the dinner."

Gramp tried to make it up to us and was very kind and polite and a little hangdog to Mamma, and Mamma, to show Gramp she didn't hold any grudge, said we would enjoy Butte, Montana, and Gramp's share in the silver and copper mine, which hadn't been paying any dividends for a long time.

So we drove up to Butte over cow trails, dirt roads, mining pikes, and there it was, a city high up, full of smoke and tough men and miners. And waiting for us in the Hotel de Mineral was the manager of the mine, fat little Sean (pronounced *Shawn*) O'Kenna, with the Dublin Abercorn Road accent still in his mouth. Round, bearded, scarred, and always smiling.

"Hiya, ol' boyo," he greeted Gramp.

We met a lot of relatives: his prospective son-in-law Parnell Seumas Michael Hayes, and Sean's daughter, the bride-to-be Katie, "a big, bouncing gal." Of course we had to come to the wedding tomorrow. Mamma said she would try, Gramp said yes, and I was excited.

It was no time, Gramp saw, to talk of the mine, or the prospects of silver or copper. Gramp went to the church for the wedding the next day and Mamma and I were due at the house of the bride's father for the wedding feast and party.

Gramp met us at the curb as we drove in. "G. M."

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

ready primed, he helped Mamma out of the car. A fiddle sounded, and good laughter, and a slap. Gramp nodded toward the house and threw his stogie away.

A little man with his left arm off at the elbow opened the door and wiped goose fat off his wide mouth with a napkin.

"Ah, you would be Longstreet." The little man held a hand out—the only one he had. "Desmond is my name, and Parnell's uncle I am—and welcome you are. This way."

He led us into a crowded parlor. A long planked table took up a wall, and, on it, suckling pigs and cakes and side dishes fought against an array of bottles and two tapped kegs of foaming beer. People ate and swore and sweated.

Sean shouted, "Open up the good wine, Matt. It's the owld gentleman drinking. A bit of the chicken breast for the owld dandy and a proper lad he is yet, kissin' the colleens. He's buried six wives, they say, and one was a black nager princess with rings in 'er nose! Fancy that!"

More food, more drink. More people crowded in and introduced themselves. "Pleased to meet you, I am. O'Malley and Keen, and Mitchel and Kelley and Devall and Murphy and Chassdel, and Cohen and Finkel (They live upstairs, it's their silver we're using) and Rosco and O'Neil and Dirks and Tony Pizzelee, a fine wop and a white man (And how do you like his red wine?), and here are the children (Shake hands, you limbs of evil!). It's Mike and Eddie and Nell, and little John and you, Fenia—the back of me hand to you and kape away from that cake or I'll pull yer drawers down and give you one on the bare arse ('Oh, Mother! And me going on twelve') and this is Mary—sure. Parnell's mother, and you must taste her cooking."

The food: plenty and hot and cold and spiced and baked by a girl that "learned it all in Gabhala. In Kingstown, in Dublin, by the South Bull, Parnell's mother learned to cook for the English (May Jaysus strike them all dead). Sorry, Father, what is on the mind is on the tongue with me. Simple oaths, like simple poems, are best."

Sean was losing his voice as Katie cut the cake. "The big

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

piece for you, Mr. Longstreet. And here, for you, Mother Parnell, and you, Father, and you and you and you—and *you*. Lend me the sword, Katie. Lads, stand back and keep the young nippers from bawling or you'll all feel the flat of the sword on your pants seam.

"Bung the new keg, Martin boy, and you'll find more bottles in the feather bed. Well, here's to you, Parnell. Here's to you, Katie. Love and happiness and fortune and health and many children and a good home and a sober life. The best wedding this year in Butte, even if the MacMurtrys had a nager band and shamrock-shaped ice cream."

The next day everything looked grim and smoky in Butte. Gramp went out to the mine and took me along, and we went down in iron buckets into a long, deep hole in the ground—steep, steep dripping stone walls, and then heat. Little lamps all around and the smell of mine mules. Men naked to the hips hammering and little railways and little steel-wheeled carts pulled by the mules. That's all remember.

Later Gramp had a long talk with Sean, when he fully sobered up. But there was no use in Gramp's trying to get any true understanding of how the mine was doing. Gramp should have sold out his share, but he didn't, and he sent Katie and Parnell an ugly table lamp made of silver sea shells holding up a red silk lampshade with feathers on the top; it was the best Mamma could buy in Butte.

Then we got into our car and started for California, with no more side trips. We were all still pretty tired from the wedding, and Gramp had a little black bottle in his pocket which he took when Mamma wasn't looking. "Gout medicine, Stevie, a gift from Sean, came from Dublin, and it's doing me a world of good. Someday that mine will make millions for you, boy. Millions."

(It didn't.)



"HOW YOU GONNA KEEP 'EM DOWN
ON THE FARM?"

ON THE GOLDEN GATE

I NEVER SEE SAN FRANCISCO WITHOUT GETTING A BANG out of the lofty hills wrapped in mist, the houses clinging to their steep stone sides, the gray-silver skies, the sweep of bay and the hassle of hills on the Golden Gate. It's like no other city I've ever seen, and yet it stands as part of a culture that is the East, and that is also Europe. It's like nothing else in California, certainly not the daffy pace and the nutty fruitcake complexion of Los Angeles, and the lesser breeds in Brentwood, Pasadena, and points south.

I can remember the day we came to the Oakland Ferry station and looked across at the city of San Francisco. It was a few days before Christmas, and we peered across the lead-colored bay at the populated hills, the fog already dancing on the roof tops, and the deep, bitter green of pine trees clinging to one shaggy hill.

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

Mamma shivered and wrapped herself in Gramp's bearskin coat. "Hot water is what I need, lots of it, and good soap and crisp clean towels."

"Now, Sari, let's remember we promised to get in touch with Mrs. Jake Beekman, the rancher's wife."

"People," said Mamma as we drove onto the ferry, "get in the way too much when you want to see a country or a city. I just want lots of hot water."

The ferry was running in a coat of mist, and the harbor horns were making deep sea sounds. Everything was dotted and soaked with spots of water. This is the best climate you will find in San Francisco, when the weather is what the natives call *good*.

Mamma said, "Gramp. Where are we staying?"

"The Palace Hotel. It isn't what it once was, but in its day . . . *Yahooo!* It was mighty fine, the best thing here besides the Barbary Coast."

"Can't we stay in a modern place?" Mamma asked, showing that even in 1919 people threw the word *modern* around like a loose shoe.

The Palace Hotel was big, impressive, and old, with solid marble columns and hanging crystal fixtures in the ceiling singing in the breeze. The rooms were big, the beds long, and from the window you could see almost more of San Francisco than you could take in. The room was full of flowers, candy boxes tied in red ribbons, a basket filled with stuffed olives, smoked hams and hors d'oeuvres in glass.

Mamma said, "They've put us in the kitchen!"

Gramp read a card on the baskets. "No, it's from Mamie Beekman. Says, 'Welcome to our City.'"

"And eat hardy," said Mamma, taking the pins out of her riding hat. "She must think we're starving Balts or something."

We were dressing for dinner when the phone rang and someone said something very fast that we couldn't hear very well. Three minutes later there was a knock at the door. There stood a large, pretty woman, built along the . . .

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

Ark, and with her was a very beautiful young girl of fourteen, with an upturned nose and cruel green eyes. The Ark came in fast, talking quickly, and moved among us with skill and speed, kissing, handshaking, and pressing us close to a twice-life-sized bosom heavily scented with chemical violets.

"Ah, the Longstresses at last, at last! Mamie is the name. Mamie Beekman, but you just call me Mamie, and call me often. Jake said you'd be in Frisco, but that husband of mine, try and get him away from the ranch. Well, welcome to the town, boom, boom, and all that muck. Welcome to the only real city in the real West. Don't bother dressing, I'm giving a party on the top of Russian Hill, and this is my daughter, Esme. Esme, kiss the young man, and stop pulling on your dress. General, it's good to see you. Well, let's roll, time's fleeing and the band is playing 'Dixie.'"

I expected Mamma to freeze her solid with a few well-picked-over words, but Mamma was a sport and liked fun. Something in the big pressure play being put on by Mamie appealed to Mamma, and Mamma was a fine actress. She could steer a scene any way she felt it. She slapped Mamie across her yielding acres of behind and put on the grin of a horse hand sun-fishing a bronc at a big rodeo.

"Sure thing, Mamie," said Mamma in a tone of voice then being used by a young vaudeville actress called Mae West. "You show us all the way."

We all went out, got into the big waiting car, and drove up more hills and down the other sides and went past Chinese signboards and places smelling of tired fish and sun-dried ducks, and along white houses with great big fat bay windows. San Francisco is mad about bay windows, and it has the most I have ever seen.

We stopped at last before a marble and gray stone house, and Mamie said, "Stanford White built it for Jake. I wanted Frank Lloyd Wright, but that Jake, he's a man you can't move without using TNT blasting powder."

Esme said to me, "You walk pigeon-toed."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

"Your eyes are too close together," I said. (I wasn't Gramp's grandson for nothing.) Esme pinched me, and I got up a good funny face, rolling my eyeballs back till only the whites showed, pushing up my nose with one finger and stretching my mouth with two more. It usually worked with girls. They screamed and ran for cover. But Esme just shrugged and stuck out her tongue. She made horns of her hands and pushed them into her ears and rotated them. Pretty good for a girl, but nothing fancy.

The inside of the house was as gay as the outside, and that was pretty fancy if you knew San Franciscans when it came to spending money for houses, rooms, and walls. A lot of people were in the place, and the first Dixieland *jass* music I had ever heard close up in my life was being played by seven men on a platform. It was pioneer stuff—and early riff: "Camp Meeting Blues," "Livery Stable Stomp," "Maple Leaf Rag," and a lot that is now forgotten or made sweet and cool.

"Let's dig in," said Mamie. "Esme, show the young man where he can wash his hands."

"You want to wash?" Esme grinned.

Well, by that time I was in love with Esme, and instead of finding the place to wash my hands, I said I had washed, and Esme and I went behind the trees and she showed me how to kiss. I had a general idea, but no real practice. I made my first mistake—I liked it.

There is nothing duller, except to the recovered victim, than a young man in love. Love, Mamma swore, is wasted on the very young, "for they are too banal and brash to take it calmly and in leisure, to study its every facet and with patience enjoy each morsel of it in subtle detail." First love, I found, is hot and itchy, painfully uncomfortable. One sweats and with graceless emotions makes a damn fool of oneself. I suspect I was like all the rest, but I have no memory of anything but the bittersweet agony of the pleasure of suffering. Love is the

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

Ark, and with her was a very beautiful young girl of fourteen, with an upturned nose and cruel green eyes. The Ark came in fast, talking quickly, and moved among us with skill and speed, kissing, handshaking, and pressing us close to a twice-life-sized bosom heavily scented with chemical violets.

"Ah, the Longstresses at last, at last! Mamie is the name. Mamie Beekman, but you just call me Mamie, and call me often. Jake said you'd be in Frisco, but that husband of mine, try and get him away from the ranch. Well, welcome to the town, boom, boom, and all that muck. Welcome to the only real city in the real West. Don't bother dressing, I'm giving a party on the top of Russian Hill, and this is my daughter, Esme. Esme, kiss the young man, and stop pulling on your dress. General, it's good to see you. Well, let's roll, time's fleeing and the band is playing 'Dixie.'"

I expected Mamma to freeze her solid with a few well-picked-over words, but Mamma was a sport and liked fun. Something in the big pressure play being put on by Mamie appealed to Mamma, and Mamma was a fine actress. She could steer a scene any way she felt it. She slapped Mamie across her yielding acres of behind and put on the grin of a horse hand sun-fishing a bronc at a big rodeo.

"Sure thing, Mamie," said Mamma in a tone of voice then being used by a young vaudeville actress called Mae West. "You show us all the way."

We all went out, got into the big waiting car, and drove up more hills and down the other sides and went past Chinese signboards and places smelling of tired fish and sun-dried ducks, and along white houses with great big fat bay windows. San Francisco is mad about bay windows, and it has the most I have ever seen.

We stopped at last before a marble and gray stone house, and Mamie said, "Stanford White built it for Jake. I wanted Frank Lloyd Wright, but that Jake, he's a man you can't move without using TNT blasting powder."

Esme said to me, "You walk pigeon-toed."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

"Your eyes are too close together," I said. (I wasn't Gramp's grandson for nothing.) Esme pinched me, and I got up a good funny face, rolling my eyeballs back till only the whites showed, pushing up my nose with one finger and stretching my mouth with two more. It usually worked with girls. They screamed and ran for cover. But Esme just shrugged and stuck out her tongue. She made horns of her hands and pushed them into her ears and rotated them. Pretty good for a girl, but nothing fancy.

The inside of the house was as gay as the outside, and that was pretty fancy if you knew San Franciscans when it came to spending money for houses, rooms, and walls. A lot of people were in the place, and the first Dixieland *jass* music I had ever heard close up in my life was being played by seven men on a platform. It was pioneer stuff—and early riff: "Camp Meeting Blues," "Livery Stable Stomp," "Maple Leaf Rag," and a lot that is now forgotten or made sweet and cool.

"Let's dig in," said Mamie. "Esme, show the young man where he can wash his hands."

"You want to wash?" Esme grinned.

Well, by that time I was in love with Esme, and instead of finding the place to wash my hands, I said I had washed, and Esme and I went behind the trees and she showed me how to kiss. I had a general idea, but no real practice. I made my first mistake—I liked it.

There is nothing duller, except to the recovered victim, than a young man in love. Love, Mamma swore, is wasted on the very young, "for they are too banal and brash to take it calmly and in leisure, to study its every facet and with patience enjoy each morsel of it in subtle detail." First love, I found, is hot and itchy, painfully uncomfortable. One sweats and with graceless emotions makes a damn fool of oneself. I suspect I was like all the rest, but I have no memory of anything but the bittersweet agony of the pleasure of suffering. Love is the

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

willing acceptance of suffering, Gramp said, at least in its first stages, and Esme certainly kept me at the huddles, panting and bug-eyed.

Gramp came into the ornate lobby of the Palace Hotel, his cigar smoke trailing him by half a length, and he sat down at my side near the newsstand and took my arm.

"Damn it, boy, stop acting like a sick cat. The girl isn't worth it."

I said, "Gramp, what's between Esme and me is, well, it's personal."

"Not at your age: twelve!"

"Thirteen," I said with dignity. "I've started a mustache."

Gramp felt my upper lip, looked closely at it, and shook his head with a new respect.

"Welcome to puberty."

"She's wonderful, but I don't understand her."

"You're in for it, boy. The women already have their claws in your heart and tail feathers, and you're going to suffer like I have all my life."

"Gramp, could I have five dollars to take Esme to Chinatown?"

Gramp sighed and handed me the money. "Not even going to try to break the woman habit?"

How can I tell you now about Esme? It's over thirty years since that afternoon, and a great many other emotions, ideals, personal events, have packed in like veils between me and that time. She was a woman even at fourteen. She made no sense to me—and she was delightful. She knew her values and held herself, if not above rubies, at least above ice-cream sodas and hand-holding on street corners. She was as wise as Eve full of apple pie, and as evil, I suppose, as Lady Godiva tempting white horses and Peeping Toms. I guess she was really just a bright, budding girl with all her erotic emotions in proper order, and I was just a goof—litmus paper to test her reactions on.

I said, as I handed her a wilted fifty-cent bunch of violets, "Good to see you again, Esme."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

"Wipe your chin."

I wiped my chin. "How would you like to see some paintings? Gramp and I found some fine Degas at the museum."

"Look, we're going to hear a real razzmatazz jazz band."

"What's a razzmatazz jazz band?"

She looked at me and probably thought, as you must be thinking now: *Doesn't the fool know about jazz?* I must explain that jazz in 1919 was not only unknown to most Americans; to the few who knew it, it was not respectable and was usually played only in houses with odd upstairs rooms for rent, with contents, for an hour or so.

"Jazz," said Esme, "is the most wonderful music. Can you bunny-hug?"

"I can hug," I said, the willing victim.

"This is a dance, and it's better to jazz. Jazz," she explained to me, "is from New Orleans, but now it's spreading out. There are two kinds."

"You're smart, Esme," I said, taking her arm. "Very smart."

We went down toward the place where the bridge is now built across the Golden Gate, and the little cafés were unpainted. Across one café front was a large sign:

ORIGINAL NEW ORLEANS JASS [not jazz] BAND

I looked at Esme as if I were St. Anthony and she were luring me to the devil, or asking me to light her opium pipe. I acted brave and opened the door for her. We went past the palms in brass pots and into a back room. On a platform were four Negroes playing something very exciting. I knew all about ragtime that Mamma played, but this wasn't ragtime. This was a new beat, a new kind of voice in the trumpet and the cornet, and the string bass wasn't being played by a bow; a large fat black man was beating it with his hand. I had no idea you could play a string bass by hand.

The waiter was at our elbow, and Esme peeled off her gloves and said, "Two gin rickeys."

The waiter looked at me. *shrugged and the air--*

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

*If you like me, honey baby
You've got to leave this town.
She said, Don't you leave me here
But sweet papa, if you must go
Leave a dime for beer.*

Our drinks came, with the bootleg gin, and we drank and Esme smiled. "It's the real biggity-boogity. Don't you like it?"

"Oh, I don't know, Esme. It's loud."

At which point she gave me some hep talk of the period, but I was stoned cold by the gin and no longer remember a word of the jazz slant of 1919. It ended up with my saying that if she liked it, why then I liked it too. I held her hand and touched her knee lightly with my finger tips.

The waiter was back. "How old are you kids? Boss wants to know."

"Listen," said Esme coolly, "don't try that. You knew Stephen was only a boy when we came in. You could get in trouble if I raised a fuss."

"Finish your drink and get out."

Esme said to me, "Don't you *dare* tip this geek."

*I thought I heard Buddy Bolden say
Dirty nasty butt, take it easy
And let Mister Bolden play.*

We left the café and went to a public park. Esme said, "You may kiss me."

"Thank you," I said, and I kissed her and held her arm and I could smell the crushed, dying violets. I felt I was ready to die myself. Everything was so sad and so wonderful and so full of lights that I knew for danged sure I was in love grown-up style; nothing else could make me feel so dreadful on top of that gin.

"Mamma is giving a jazz party tonight," Esme said, "and they'll really let out and play. 'Livery Stable Blues,' 'Dipper-mouth,' 'Young Woman Blues.' The real thing, not this Tin Pan Alley stuff."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

"You're real smart, Esme. Can I kiss you again?"

"You're cute, Stephen. You *don't* ask for a kiss. You do it."

"Suppose you don't want me to kiss you?"

"Oh, then I just slap your face."

That seemed fair, so I kissed her again.

There were seven Negro jazz players at the Beekman suite that night. They used derby hats to mute their horns, and the piano player was smoking a cigar. Mrs. Beekman kissed me, kissed Mamma, and shook Gramp's paw and said, "The real gully-low gutbucket, isn't it?"

"What?" asked Mamma, wondering what primitive rites she had stumbled into.

But Mrs. Beekman just said, "Wait and see; jazz is going to sweep America."

And Gramp said, "Like hell it is!" (Which shows how wrong he could be.)

Mrs. Beekman smiled. "Now this dance is called the Grizzle Hug. Listen what they do to the music: how they take a melody and change the form, and the solo horn takes over and the others play around him, free style."

*If your house catch fire
And dey no water round,
Throw your trunk out the window
And let the shack burn down.*

Just then I saw Esme. She was wearing a blue gown with a blue band around her hair and was carrying a small feather fan. This was nearly 1920, remember, and fashions were odder and, in a way, more amusing.

I went over to her and said, "Gee."

"Gee, what?"

"Gee, you look peachee."

Esme and I went out on the balcony. There was the town, and the hills and all the harbor and the fog, and I loved it. Lord, how I loved that town then—and still do.

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

Esme said, "I've got some money, and I've an idea. Let's go to Europe, just the two of us."

"Sure," I said, a little dazzled. Nothing seemed real any more; I was a victim of destiny.

"Of course we'll get separate staterooms, and you can let your mustache grow and pass as a Princeton man. You're tall for your age."

I tugged at the feeble down on my upper lip. "Sure, but why separate staterooms? We'll get married."

Esme looked at me, and jazz drifted out on the balcony.

*Now I ain't rough
And I don't fight
But the woman that gets me
Got to treat me right.*

Esme said coldly, "I'm never going to marry."

"Why?"

"Look what it's done to my mother, and to *your* mother."

"What?"

"I'm not going to hand my whole life to a man to step on. I thought you loved me, Stephen."

"Sure. I want to marry you."

Esme said, "Boor!" and went inside. I didn't talk to her again that night. I got back to the hotel, and Gramp came out of the bathroom rubbing his bald head and found me weeping into my pillow. He sat down and patted me on the shoulder. I turned over and said, "Esme has no morals."

"No woman has; they only use morals when they need them to gain their end."

"I'll never love again." (I take no responsibility for my teenage dialogue.)

"Put it in writing and sign it," said Gramp. "Now get some sleep. Tomorrow is Christmas, and we'll go shopping and I'll buy you a twenty-two hunting rifle. And then next week Sari is giving a New Year's party for just us three. Lots of fun ahead."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

I said no thanks; I was finished with life. I lay down and slept and dreamed I had sent Esme a golden spider with a ruby heart in its mouth for Christmas. The next day I found a golden spider in a store (no ruby heart) and I sent it to her. She sent me a set of early jazz recordings, and I sat weeping (and winding the early Stone Age victrola) and listening to:

*It takes a brown-skin woman to satisfy
my mind.*

(Some months ago I was lecturing in the Middle West, and a very wide fat woman with gray hair, curled and tinted blue, puffed her way up to me after the talk and held out a ham of an arm and said in a loud fat voice, "It's certainly good to see you again, Stephen. Meet my daughter, Mrs. Sperman, and my two sons, Doug and Jim, and this is my husband. Arthur, this is Stephen Longstreet; we were childhood sweethearts in Frisco. My name is Mrs. Arthur McCary Foyle now. Been married twenty-eight years. It's good to see you again. I'm a grandmother, you know. Three times. I'm going to read all your books. I want you to autograph them for me, something very personal. You must speak at our Liberty Belles Club.")

*Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven.*



GLORY GIRL, EARLY FILM STAR

LAND OF NO SANE RETURN

TWO DAYS AFTER NEW YEAR'S WE WERE ROLLING down the dusty coast highway, not yet, and not to be for some time, the perfect ribbon of concrete that follows the California ocean. When we got to Los Angeles, it was not the daffy, exciting, and brainless giant it is today. We had been four days out of San Francisco, traveling muffled to the ears to keep out dust and grinding past burned hillside and very blue sea on roads that cattle and Spanish dons had made badly, and where often the word "gasoline" was unheard-of. But we made it.

We rolled up from the sea onto what is now Sunset Boulevard but was then a goat trail among wild growths, bean fields, and the small huts of Mexican field hands. There were a few ranches, but not very active ones. And what is now Beverly Hills was a series of rising slopes, mostly overgrown with native

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

herb and bush, and here and there someone was thinking of making this a lush heaven on earth by laying out tapelines and putting up signs—but not very actively.

Mamma was tired from the long ride, Gramp was out of cigars and whisky, and I was too young to be anything but thrilled by new things, the color of places—sights never seen by an Eastern boy before.

"Hollywood," said Gramp, "should be right ahead."

"I hear it doesn't exist," said Mamma.

"It better," said Gramp. "Glory Girl has been writing me to come on and try out the climate."

"Glory Girl," said Mamma, "is vulgar. That is why she's such a success out here among the jumping snapshots."

We passed billboards advertising Charlie Chaplin in *Shoulder Arms*, Douglas Fairbanks in *Knickerbocker Buckeroo*, Mary Pickford in *Daddy Long Legs*. And such names as Pearl White, D. W. Griffith, Norma Talmadge, and Elsie Ferguson were lettered on small theater fronts. We drove over the county strip toward where the shacks of Hollywood were scribbled in the distance. I must explain that Glory Girl (that wasn't really her name) was one of the great silent movie stars, as well known as Theda Bara and other glamour pusses of the day. She was an old friend (not so old, really) of Gramp's. He had known her when she was a thin little earnest actress on Broadway and (he always admitted it) had helped her up in the world.

By 1920, she was a great motion-picture star, had forgotten all about acting, and hung on long legs from airplanes, was dropped from tall buildings, fought sharks and wild bulls, and led (on the screen) the most dangerous life in the world. I used to sit on the edge of my seat eating my fingernails when I saw her films; and when the Chinese or the Spanish heels tortured her, or threw her in front of speeding trains, or from the decks of boats, rage and love and pain would fill me, and her beautiful tormented image would blur in front of me as I dreamed of saving this shapely white body and fighting off the bad people who hunted her. For me, motion pictures have lost a fine vio-

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

lence and epic purity since Glory Girl stopped appearing on the screens of the world.

So there we were on a hot, dusty day (before the famous smog) looking for Orange Grove Drive. At last we found it and a white Moorish monster of a house, with iron railings and colored awnings and a lawn big enough to launch an elephant race. There was a Japanese butler who led us into cool, perfumed darkness over red tile floors. Suddenly, at the top of a curving staircase (which, I later learned, had been designed by Cecil B. De Mille), appeared Glory Girl. She was dressed in white, with a cocktail shaker in her hand. (Everyone seemed to have a cocktail shaker in his hand in the twenties. I've checked with old friends and they seem to remember it that way, too.)

"Darling!" she said.

She came down and kissed Gramp on the top of his bald head and was introduced to Mamma and myself. I smelled my hand where it had pressed hers, and it smelled of bootleg gin and orange blossoms and well-bred dogs and linen warmed in the sun.

"Well, you really made it," Glory Girl said, pouring three glasses full as the Jap held them out.

"We did," said Gramp, "but the roads almost beat us."

Glory Girl winked and said, "Hell, we don't like roads—don't want strangers and agents and tax collectors out here."

Mamma said, "You talk like a Native Daughter."

Glory Girl nodded and picked up a fourteen-inch cigarette holder. "I was born in California at the age of twenty-two. Five years ago."

Mamma took that statement with a shrug. Gramp lit her cigarette, swallowed his drink, and coughed and said, "Now that's good gin."

"Just off the boat," said Glory Girl. "Scraped off." And we all laughed at the famous joke of the period.

Mamma said, "I'd like to wash up."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

Glory Girl said, "Sure, and we'll have lunch, and then we'll run off my new picture, *The White Slave*."

Mamma said, "That would be fine." After she washed and Gramp and I rubbed ourselves with Colorado River water, we all went out onto the sunny patio where the lunch was spread out on cool, green linen.

Lunch was almost over when a short balding little man dressed in a polo-player's outfit came in. I found out later that riding pants were the uniforms of the best people, and that most of them couldn't ride a horse. They just liked tight pants and boots.

Glory Girl kissed the little man and said, "Darling, these are the Longstreets. This is Egon Hutz, my director. If you have a Hungarian for a friend you don't need enemies."

"Your slave," said Egon, nibbling his way up her arm with continental kisses. As I remember, they talked like their film titles in those days.

The director looked at Mamma and clicked his heels. "Mrs. Longstrasse, you ought to be in pictures."

Gramp smiled. "She is. She used to pose for Charles Dana Gibson before my son married her."

Mamma said, "I don't think motion pictures will last as entertainment."

"Entertainment," said Egon, rolling his eyes at me and swallowing food. "We don't make entertainment; we sell dreams. Rose-colored dreams for people who can't dream their own dreams. Come out tomorrow morning and we'll try to fit you into Glory's new picture, *The Dark Woman*."

Glory said, "That's to follow my new picture, *The White Slave*, which we are going to see now right after the General finishes his brandy."

Gramp nodded, and she kissed the top of his head again and called him "darling." I found out later everybody was called darling out here, but it impressed me then.

I don't honestly remember much about *The White Slave*. I suppose there is a print around someplace that I could see,

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

but that would break the skin of personal dreams, and Glory Girl is dead, and the motion-picture business as dreams go no longer really exists, and even the Hollywood Hungarians like Egon are opening teashops and real-estate offices.

Breakfast the next morning on Glory Girl's patio was calm and delightful.

The horn blew out front and we all piled into Egon's Franklin. They don't make that car any more, but it was a good one. It was air-cooled and had a front end like a bulldog's jaw. Egon drove it like a race horse. We went out toward what is today Culver City, where Ince and Sennett were active. There was no Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in those days, and Sam Goldwyn was still named Goldfish.

Egon's company was already standing on a desert set with old palm trees and evil-looking Arabs reading the horse-racing forms. The harem girls were drinking cokes and comparing last night's dates.

As soon as Egon, dressed in shiny black boots and switching himself with a braided riding crop, came in, someone yelled, "Quiet!"

Everyone else yelled, "Quiet," and this went on until someone blew a whistle. A camera was nailed to the ground (cameras didn't move in those days; the actors did), and a dark man dressed as an Arab chief stood scowling while Glory Girl got into an Arab evening gown of silver beads. Egon chewed on his riding crop. Someone covered the sunlight with muslin shades (outdoor shooting was cheap and sure) and two men, one with a fiddle and one with a small piano on wheels, stood around until Egon said, "Mood Music!"

The music started. Egon said, "Action! Camera! Keep it rolling . . . more fiddle there. Reggie, grab her . . . closer. Bat your eyelashes, Glory. That's it . . . closer. Now sigh. No, *sigh*, don't blow out a birthday cake. More fiddle, that's it, now turn, and weep. Damn it, cry! You're kidnaped; you're about to meet a fate worse than death, or something. Now struggle; no, struggle, don't shimmy. Oh hell, cut!"

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

It was very interesting, and a camel almost bit me. Egon threw away his riding crop and they tried it again, and I stood in front of the cameraman and watched Glory Girl and Reggie engaged for moral combat.

The party that night was a good one, I remember. Mary Pickford came, and Cecil B. De Mille. There was Will Rogers, I remember, and that's all. I no longer remember all the other handsome young men and women tanned by sun and flushed with drink, or the leather jackets and the fine flannels, the famous teeth, the popular hips. I suppose they all had names and were famous then. But I just don't remember them.

We did go to a dinner in some popular male star's house. I think it was John Barrymore's, but I'm not sure. It may have been one of the stars of the period who tried to act like him; but I like to think it was John's house. My total recall is often very good, but when it has holes in it, I give up trying to remember. I think Gramp had cause to remember the Irish cocktails, which he noted were made of Irish whisky (Jameson's), absinthe (no idea whether it was real or just Pernod Veritas), curacao, and cherry juice.

We should have stayed longer in Hollywood. But I remember Gramp's saying, "Stevie, we leave at noon today. Your mother has promised to act in a picture."

"Will she flop, Gramp?" I asked.

"No, I have a feeling she will be a famous movie star. And can you think of living with Mamma rich and a success?"

I saw his point. Mamma's charm lay in the fact that she was always yearning for things. Mamma as a success would really have made living with her hard. So we pulled out that noon.

Gramp always had an idea as to why the covered wagons went West and didn't come back. We were crossing desert country, heading for Arizona, leaving California, and the car was roaring along the sand roads when he said it. Loud. "No wonder they never went East again in them covered wagons. . . ."

"Those covered wagons," said Mamma, "not *them* covered wagons."

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

"I'm talkin' Western style, gal," Gramp said, biting into the two-inch stub of his last good cigar. "Once they traveled these here roads, podner, they sure never wanted to try it again goin' that-a-way, that way East again."

Mamma sniffed the dry desert air. "You call that Western talk?"

"Ma'am, we ain't polished out yar in the West, but we plumb are right respectful of men and women. *Ouch!*"

The last was because we had hit a rut in the road. Roads were pretty bad. I sat watching the desert landscape, and Mamma refused to carry on any of Gramp's Western-style talk. She was angry at Gramp because she had wanted to stay in Hollywood and maybe work in the old silent movies.

"This the way to Tucson?" Mamma asked at last.

"It's the only road there is."

Mamma thought a while and asked, "Why don't we go to Texas? I have friends in Dallas."

Gramp tossed away his last cigar butt. "Ever hear what General Sheridan said about Texas, Sari?"

"I'm sure it's vulgar," said Mamma.

"Tell it, Gramp," I said.

"Sure it's vulgar."

Mamma didn't answer, so Gramp went on. "Seems the General got angry at Texas people and Texas ways, and he got up on his hind legs and he said, 'If I owned Hell and Texas, I'd rent out Texas and live in Hell.' 'Well,' said a Southern gentleman present, 'I guess the General knows where to find his friends!' Pretty good, eh, Sari?"

Mamma didn't open her pretty lips. Gramp looked from her to the jack rabbits on the road, and then at me. "Coventry?" he asked. I nodded my head, and Gramp frowned. By the rules, if Mamma put him in Coventry, even I couldn't talk to him. It hurt the old man a lot because he liked to talk and I thought he was worth listening to. This time I could see Gramp was really angry. He didn't even protest. He just clammed up his mouth into rigid lines and drove the car, bent over, as if he

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

were a jockey. At last we came to a frontier-looking town called Victorville, and we pulled up by a roadside gas station and eating place.

Gramp looked at Mamma as if he were giving her a last chance to say something. Then he got out of the car and ambled over to the Mexican and his wife who ran the place and asked, "Howdy, podner, anything eatable in these yar parts?"

"My wife, she make a fine *enchilada*, real *orégano* and *culantro* flavor. We also have it the *mole de guajolote*, turkey with pepper sauce. My wife, she fine cook."

"Good, set one place for me. Any *cerveza* or *vino*?"

"But of course. They are not eating?" He pointed to Mamma and then to me.

Gramp looked at us and borrowed a thin Mexican cigar from the stand owner. "Sad cases, podner, real sad. Deef and dumb. Both of 'em."

"Sacred Virgin," said the Mexican, crossing himself, and his wife touched her holy medals. "Deef and dumb?"

"Born that way, most people think. But it's not true. Seems they were once very cruel to an old man. A feeble, dying old man who had made their life soft and easy, who had worked and toiled for them. And then, in his old age, they took his earthly wealth and turned him off, out into the cold world. The next morning they were rigid and when they came out of it, they were as you see 'em—stone deaf and no tongue, dumb."

Mamma's face turned red, she choked, recovered, and stared ahead of her. For years the family never got the true story of how Gramp turned Mamma's act of Coventry against her. Even I never knew why she didn't shout at the Mexican and his wife that it was all a lie. But I think Mamma had a code about life, and one of the rules was if you were beaten you took your wounds and didn't whine for mercy. Mamma hated any idea of mercy, for herself or others. So she just sat there, boiling inside.

The Mexican came out with a soiled plate on which were two stale sandwiches, with a paper-thin ham slice and one sad black

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

olive on each. He also brought two paper cups of black coffee and a kind of store-window doughnut broken in half, each on a crumpled piece of paper napkin.

The Mexican gestured to us, trying to make us understand, and he talked very loud, the way people do to deaf people and foreigners.

"The gentleman sent this out as you don't like our style of cooking. It's the only gringo food I have here. *La topa chisera*, it is sad to be like this. Would you like to try *caldo de pollo con aguacate*, chicken soup with rice, *arroz Mexicano*?"

Mamma didn't break the rule of the game. She wolfed the bread and ham and stale doughnut and drank the coffee after giving me my share. I was too cowed to protest. The Second War of Coventry wasn't going to be easy to live through.

The rest of the trip into Tucson I'd rather not write about. The food along the American roadside has never been much good, but in those days, in those places, it was worse than ever. I don't know why Mamma didn't defy Gramp and just leave the car and order her own meals—that is, I didn't know until we were near Tucson and I remembered that Mamma had no money of her own. Gramp held our fortune in his money belt hitched right around his well-fed stomach. So we ate what he allowed us: stale bread and leftovers. But Mamma didn't break Coventry. Gramp bought a Stetson and cowboy boots on tall heels, and his talk grew more and more Western, and he ate indoors and he ate the best he could find. He showed no sign of weakening in the war. He told a great many stories about us as we sat in the car. The best one was that Mamma had taken a vow of silence and that she was a saint, a real saint. Mamma disliked all the saints (except a few mad ones), and this didn't help the trip. Gramp really was enjoying the Second War of Coventry.

By the time we got to Tucson the trip was about to break up. I could see that Mamma was going to grab me and her

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

luggage and take a train East and home, as soon as she figured out how to get the railroad fare. Gramp also was set in his whim of iron.

He left us at the second-best hotel in town and said to the desk clerk, "Is there a good lawyer in town? Pardon me, I know there are no good lawyers, but one who can read and write?"

The clerk thought. "There's old man Rogers. He used to be the lawyer for Billy the Kid."

"He sounds dishonest enough. Ever hear what Abe Lincoln said when he saw a tombstone with the markings on it: 'Here Lies a Good Lawyer and an Honest Man'?"

"Nope, what did Abe say?"

"He said, 'Since when are they burying two men in one grave!'"

The clerk laughed. "That's pretty good."

Gramp nodded and went out. We both knew what the trip to the lawyer meant. Gramp was changing his will again. He had sons and daughters-in-law and grandchildren to fit, and every time life got too complicated, or he lost his temper with one in the family, Gramp changed his will. Mamma had been in and out of Gramp's will more often than a fiddler's elbow. It looked as if this time she were out again. I must say that Mamma never really cared, because she, of the whole family, was smart enough to think that Gramp didn't have anything to leave the family. He had been a very rich man in his prime, but he had lived "high off the hog," as he called it, and there wasn't much left. Mamma proved to be right, and while the last will was a beautiful literary document, about all we got were his bluestone cuff links, and he had long since replaced the stones with glass.

I don't know how Mamma *cased* Tucson, but about four o'clock she said to me as I sat reading the local paper in the hotel lobby, "We're going to tea. You see that big mountain

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

outside of town, where there used to be a fort? Well, a charming lady lives under that hill and she wants to meet some of the grandchildren of the Lost Cause."

"What cause?"

Mamma slurred her voice a bit. "The Wah between deh States."

I knew enough history to know our branch of the family called it the Civil War and not the War between the States. I looked at Mamma.

"Stop looking at me, Stevie, like your grandfather. I only phoned her and said the word *Longstreet*."

"In what accent?" I asked.

Mamma said briskly, "Come up and wash your hands, you damn Yankee."

I have never been a fighter. I followed Mamma upstairs, got washed, combed, and brushed. Then Mamma told the hotel clerk we would be at Mrs. Rodney Clark's and would he please get us a taxi.

I didn't know how Mamma would pay the taxi driver, but she only said, "Put it on our hotel bill," and gave the taximan a smile and added, "and figure in a dollar for yourself."

Mrs. Rodney Clark's was a beautiful old place of colored pink clay and red tile roofs and gardens and fountains kept cool by use of lots of water.

Mrs. Clark was young and pretty and raised dogs. She said she was "right glad you all had phoned that you all were visiting us."

I saw Mamma had her fingers crossed—and that Mrs. Clark was very earnest in her hunt for our pasts. She said, "I've been here, buried, just buried alive, just planning food and cleaning house, while Fred, that's my husband, worries over his cotton here. But now, Mrs. Longstreet, we'll talk of the past."

I went out into the garden, hoping the sun would kill me, because I had a feeling Mamma would fail to get the railroad fares.

After a while Mamma came out looking very pale, and I

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

wondered if the lunch had disagreed with her. She took my hand, hard. "Stevie, it's a phone call from the hotel. Gramp's been hurt. Bad."

"What happened?"

Mamma bit her lip. "He fell down some stairs going to see the lawyer. Mrs. Clark is sending us back to the hotel in her car."

We found Gramp groaning in bed, a bandage around one eye and a doctor twisting one arm while Gramp howled. Gramp looked up at us and held out a hand.

"I'm dying, Sari. I want to say I'm sorry. Real sorry. Kiss me before I go."

"Gramp! Oh, doctor, how bad is it?"

The doctor stopped pulling. "Well, he's got a nasty knock over one ear. And this arm. And maybe there are some internal injuries. I can't tell yet, and——"

Gramp moaned. "Am I going to die in peace?"

The doctor bandaged the arm tight and said he'd be back, and Gramp sat up in bed and even let Mamma talk him out of a cigar. "It's all my fault, Sari. I went and changed the will and felt so bad about it that I went back to change it again, and I'm not used to wearing cowboy boots, I guess, and I fell head over teakettle. Well, you can't leave me now, Sari. Not until I die. Then you'll have everything, and don't say bad things about me when I'm gone."

Mamma took off her hat. Gramp said, "It's a lucky thing I bought that cowboy hat and cowboy boots. If I hadn't fallen down those stairs we wouldn't be together now."

Mamma patted his hand and I could see she was back on our side in the Civil War.



NEW ORLEANS GIN FIZZ

ON THE DELTA

AFTER MAMMA AND GRAMP WERE RECONCILED IN Tucson, we decided New Orleans was a good place to visit. We lived very high and saw all the famous things. There seemed no way of getting Gramp out of New Orleans, and when Mamma would try, Gramp would change the words of a popular song of the period, and say, "You can get the boy out of New Orleans, but can you get New Orleans out of the boy?"

He was an old man, aware that his world would not last much longer, and he was in no hurry to leave a place where there was so much fun and bourbon and branch water. He wallowed in chicken rice à la creole at Didee's on Market Street; Solari's on Royal Street made special hotcakes for him; the Patio Royal mixed a good gin fizz and deviled a crab and baked a chicken liver he couldn't resist. The old man was eating his

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

way swiftly toward what Mamma and I dreaded—an attack of gout. Pompano en papillote with Chablis, crabs boiled in beer, and for dessert eggnog with champagne.

One morning Gramp came in and said to us, "Just had a real New Orleans breakfast."

"What's that?" Mamma asked.

Gramp sighed and sat down. "A bottle of bourbon, a steak, and a dog."

"A dog?" Mamma said.

"Yes," said Gramp. "The dog ate the steak, and my pals and I finished the bottle."

Mamma, who disliked dogs, dog stories, and dog-lovers, sniffed, and Gramp suddenly grew very red in the face and gasped in pain. Mamma said sternly to me, "Stevie, take off his shoes."

Gramp said weakly, "Now, Sari, I can still undress myself."

But I took off his shoes and pulled off his socks. Both Gramp's big toes were glowing red, like a circus light bulb.

Gramp said, "Been walking too much."

Mamma said, "Eating and drinking high off the lobster. That's gout."

"Gout!" said Gramp. "All I need is a basinful of ice water to let the swelling down. Gout!"

"Gout," said Mamma.

Gramp looked at me and I said, "Gout."

Gramp tried to put a cigar in his mouth, but Mamma took it away, smiled, and said, "No fancy food, no whiskey, no cigars, no late hours. And as soon as the big toes go down, we're leaving New Orleans." Gramp said, "What I need is some catfish fat—that always helps my gout. The fat in the head of a catfish rubbed on an aching toe will cure the gout."

Mamma said, "That's pretty unscientific."

"My toes, Sari, were created before science."

Mamma said, "We'll drive to the market and get a fatheaded catfish."

"No," said Gramp, "Stevie and I will hire a boat and gear

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

and go fishing. You can catch up with your shopping. They make a fine shoe down here."

So while Mamma went to visit a very pretty friend named Alice, who collected modern art and knew where they made the shoes Mamma wanted to buy, Gramp and I went down to the docks. Some shrimp boats were in, and the ladies of the shrimp town were entertaining the crews. Gramp muttered something about "the fall of Troy" but asked one of the ladies where he could hire a boat and crew for fishing. Agnes, as her name turned out to be, had an uncle who rented out fishing boats, and she took us to him. Her uncle seemed very young to be an uncle, and he kissed Agnes as if they weren't related.

Emile Fouchet Toursel Bornay was the captain's name, and Agnes had a full name, too—Agnes Ninette Gabrielle de Salignac. I know because they both wrote it down in my autograph album.

"I want to catch a catfish," said Gramp.

"Foo," said Emile. "We go down to the delta. I catch plenty cat there. You buy wine for the trip, no?"

"No," I said. "Gramp has *le gout*."

"*La goutte*," Emile corrected. "Well, that is too bad, but fun to get. No drinks on this trip, no?"

Gramp coughed. "I hear the native medical brews are very good for fever and pain."

Emile said, "Up the dock, there is a small store. Ask for Big John—the best fever and pain mixture you ever take for *la goutte*."

We went to the little shop and bought the fever medicine, Big John. It came in pint bottles, and Gramp bought six of them. He read the label and nodded. "This will do for my toes, Stevie. Big John, secret remedy of the natives. Certainly wine and brandy are evil in our society. Pure sassafras root, ginger, boggie juice."

"Could I see the label, Gramp?" I asked.

"Later—we've got to pick up some bait."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

Big John was certainly a healthy mixture. Emile and Gramp drank it all afternoon and lost some valuable gear; and Emile fell into a bayou and we had a bad time steering the boat home. But we made it back at nightfall, all of us with our noses peeling from sunburn and Gramp glowing a Chinese red—but feeling fine, “just fine.” Emile had a black eye where he had run into the fist of the bait-boat man in some little fight over the charges. Gramp had a few pounds of catfish fat wrapped up in the New Orleans *Item*, a newspaper. We took a taxi back to the hotel, and the room was full of shoes, new shoes in pairs—but no Mamma.

There was a note on the dresser reading, “I’m at Alice’s for dinner.”

Gramp said, “Don’t want to go out. Any Big John left, Stevie?”

“Just a short three fingers,” I said, copying Emile’s talk.

Gramp took it and said, “England expects every man to do his duty. Kiss me, Hardy.”

I took his shoes off and put him to bed.

One evening Gramp rubbed his toes with catfish fat and we got dressed and went to visit Mamma’s friend, Alice. She had a beautiful house, “seventeenth or eighteenth century, before dah Wah,” said Gramp. It was on Moss Street, with columned porticoes, embrasured French windows, and in the back, for all who cared to look, what had once been slave quarters. A grove of moss-hung live oaks floated over the house in those days, and flowers were every place. Inside, we met Alice and some of the guests. She had a cubistic Picasso and some of the more modern flat school of Paris paintings. And that in 1920 was really *avant-garde*!

Alice came from an old family, which meant, Gramp supposed, “Newgate criminals, bonded servants, and other riffraff that settled in the South.” (I’m quoting Gramp; I don’t think he was entirely wrong, but he was settling the South too easy.

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

A lot came for liberty, and to grow tobacco, and to marry Indian princesses who saved their lives. But I have to quote Gramp from time to time to show that if his arteries didn't harden, his prejudices did.)

It was a kind of lazy life in those days, after a romantic World War I. People were coming off the plantations, the old Dixie battle flags were tattered and faded, and they were admitting the rest of the United States back into society.

The dining room was old wallpaper and polished silver and furniture rubbed down like a race horse. Candles burned, on the walls the old family faces behind coats of yellow varnish watched us eat, and the last of the "white-haired old darkies" served us, wearing white gloves that grew green thumbs as they served the pea soup and turtle stew in sherry.

It was a dying culture and Gramp hated it; but I liked it. It had manners, it had taste, and it didn't use life for too much hunger after money and power. Perhaps it was out of date, but I, as a boy, liked it, and I'm sorry to see it today a cold civilization of big politics, oil wells, meanness, and petty hatreds. The South was—Gramp said—the closest we ever came to a true culture in this country—a breed and an interest in things above the herd animal. Democracy may have been pushed around, but as one sees the greed of the modern Southern cities, one can again wish for this nation of planters and riders who added something lost to us by the invention of mass-production thinking and packaging. "I would gladly trade the telephone and the airplane for an American Gauguin, or a new sauce," Gramp once said.

Of course I wasn't thinking that when I was a boy sitting in that Moss Street house watching the dark butler with the three chins and voodoo tuft of hair on his lower lip.

Later there was polite music. Negroes in red coats played French waltzes as if they had never jammed in the jazz sessions on Bourbon and Basin streets in red-light Storyville. Nobody blew a slide of the real stuff or took a riff.

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

We left town the next day, heading for Florida, where the papers said a big blow was coming. But Gramp wanted to do some big-game fishing in the Gulf from the west coast of Florida. The old boy had his reasons: "I wouldn't give a dime for the whole east coast of Florida. The sons of the robber barons are dying in Palm Beach, and the sons of the Yahoos from Ohio are breaking Miami up into lots that I wouldn't let a dog live on. I can buy half of that town for peanuts, but I'd rather have the peanuts."

(Which shows how smart Gramp was. The boom in Florida came in about five years and his peanuts would have been worth millions, but then the boom broke so Gramp wasn't out anything, anyway, if you figure it that way.)

The car ran, more or less, and we had the usual number of flat tires. But near the Florida state line, Mamma suddenly developed a fever. We stopped our journey down the delta, at a bayou village, and put her to bed in a big white old house now turned into a hotel. Its sign read: "For the Gentry, by Day or Week."

The local doctor looked wise and said, "It's the native misery. Yo' should be fine with a week in bed and some beat-up milk punch, with an egg in it. Yo' can't beat a milk punch, maybe a spoon of rum in it too."

Mamma didn't get worse, but the fever hung on, and Gramp decided we'd stay there till Mamma was able to travel again without fever. We worried, but then grew bored, and as they took good care of Mamma, Gramp and I explored the vast life of the delta, the coast, the gulf, the bayous, and the islands. Mamma sat in her wide brass bed in a beautiful bed jacket and read the poems of Lord Byron in a small blue volume that belonged to the people who ran the place. She hated to have us hang around and routed us out early every day.

Gramp and I found the decaying neighborhood plantations, the remains of pillared houses among now-lost bayous, dried up, Gramp said, in time and forgotten in history. We saw weeds

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

and chipped marble pools, sunken paths, and trees dying of neglect.

Gramp hired a boat, and we floated out past the cypresses dying in salt water and past the orange flower and the indigo iris. The shore was thick with growths. We could count water hickory, tupelo, bald cypress, and locust. I still remember all those names. Over everything were ferns and creepers, palmettos and the green gold, the silver white of choking vines. Gramp said it was like Indo-China, where he had once built a railroad.

Mamma worried me. But then she got better. Her fever left her, and she sat on the porch and at meals she ate a lot and drank the local wine. Soon she said, "I'm ready to go on."

Gramp said, "We could go right home. Sell the car and take a train."

Mamma shook her head. "No, let's go on."

The next day we were on our way, heading for the Florida fishing coast. Mamma was wedged in comfortable in the back of the car, wearing a veil, and Gramp drove with care the rutted roads. We passed shack boats and barges, went through leaning towns about to drop into gullies, and fought the sand fleas and the gnats and the local cooking. Mamma enjoyed it all and said, "It's g.d. good to be alive." And Gramp proved his religion by saying very loud, "Amen!"



MIAMI IN THE TWENTIES

WHITE SUNLIGHT

I SHALL NEVER FORGET OUR RIDE DOWN THE WEST coast of Florida. It was rough going in those days for the roaring, but ill-slung car, along the sand roads, the swamp bottoms and under the moss-hung Spanish oaks. We crawled and bounced through Wakulla and Taylor and Citrus counties, past the groves of Hernando and Pasco and Manatee. Below Tampa, below the bay, the points jut out into the gulf, and below Passage Key Inlet and Anna Maria Key, the long lean spits of sand go out a long way, and here we found Sarasota Key.

Mamma, leaning on a slender sunshade, looked over the sand and the sky and the heavy sea birds coming landward after a day's fishing, and she said, "I don't like it."

Gramp was putting up our tent with the aid of driftwood

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

timbers, and he said, "Hell and high water, Sari, this is living."

Mamma poured sand from her tiny shoes and said, "If I don't get any hotel life, you don't go fishing."

Gramp looked at me and said, "Stevie, I can teach you all about life, but you're going to make all my mistakes. Well, I hear the food is very good at the hotel."

The second night we found a Greek sponge diver's eating place run by a one-eyed Greek with a huge stomach who fell in love with Mamma and made us egg and lemon soup himself, and brought it to the table, his face shining with olive oil and love.

The one-eyed Greek, his full name Captain Demetrius Iambros Mitsotakis (that's how he signed a love poem he wrote to Mamma and which I still have), was a powerful man and a great liar (I hope) about his adventures. Gramp called him Gus, and Mamma called him Over Ardent, but he did cook very good food. And he got for Gramp, by hire, a large blue sailboat and a crew of two Greek boys named Panos and Argiros.

One morning—it was still dark—I was punched awake, and there was Gramp dressed in beachcomber outfit and carrying stinking cuttlefish bait.

"Get up, you lazy little scut! The snappers are running with the tide." I dressed, yawned, and followed Gramp to the dock. The blue boat, stinking of long-dead sponges, was there, and the two Greek boys that Gramp called Hans and Fritz (for no reason at all) were rigging fishing gear. We went aboard and the sail was lifted. The Greek boys crossed themselves, touched their holy medals, and got out the beer bottles. We sailed and Gramp steered and drank beer and I stuck bait on hooks.

Gramp took a rod and line and looked at the bait and added a fresh warm clam. He threw the line into the sea and sat waiting. We all sat fishing. It grew warmer. Noon passed. Gramp made a strike and stood up and shouted, "I've got a hell of a big one!"

He bit his stogie in half, grew red in the face, and began

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

slowly to reel in the rod, bent almost in half. A great silver fish cut the sea to one side, came up, and went down in a half circle. Spume and spindrift took him back. The line smoked out. The sea grew calm, then wilder and wilder as the fish leaped again. I felt the agony of his heartbreaking leap. Gramp reeled in again, cursing. The boat drifted; the gawk of a sea gull floated overhead. Far off a cloud set high in the blue sky, and I felt the wonder of the moment and gripped the sides of the boat and watched. The white sun blinded me as the fish leaped again. He was weaker now and Hans got out the hand net. Gramp fell, recovered, and banged against the side of the boat. Suddenly he fell back, and rod, reel, and a section of tangled line fell in over him. The fish was free.

Gramp stood up and untangled himself. "I tripped," he said. "Biggest fish I ever saw, eh, boys?"

"Marlin," said Hans.

"——," said Gramp. "I was just butterfingers."

The boys got the sail up and we went before the wind and around a key past the slimy ribs of a long-sunk boat. The iron was rusted on her, and the wood was riddled to lace with snails and sea slugs. When the wind let up, we fished again and we all caught snappers and some long dark fish whose name I now forget.

We took our catch to the one-eyed Greek. Gus was full of gloom, chopping at his meat block with a great knife, an unhappy-looking man.

"The lady will *not* be here for dinner."

"Where is she?" asked Gramp.

"She is at the Ringling house. You are to join her there."

We went to the hotel and Gramp bathed me and scrubbed me but said I still smelled like herring salad. We got dressed and took a taxi out to the Ringling palace. It still stands, the home of the Ringlings, the owners of the famous circus—and the circus still spends its winters there. But the old place is a museum now, where rotting old masters covered with mildew prove you can't keep art in the tropics. Mamma had met one

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

of the Ringlings at the hotel porch, and he had invited her and us out for dinner.

The dining room was huge. A dark Rubens rape of a goddess filled one wall, and what may have been a real El Greco watched us eat. The Ringling at the head of the table was highly amused by Mamma's story of our travels. He said to Gramp, "You have a wonderful granddaughter."

Gramp said, "She isn't related to me. My son found her under a raccoon coat at a Yale-Harvard game."

The Ringling man said, "It's a wonderful idea of hers to ride some of our horses, don't you think? They need exercise."

Gramp was eying Mamma. "Now, Sari, what have you been telling this man?"

Mamma said, "Only that I took three blue ribbons at the last Long Island horse show for my jumping."

"The horse helped," said Gramp. "You can't ride circus horses."

"Gramp, I'm of age to make up my own mind."

"You're not riding," Gramp said.

I don't remember much more because I was sleepy, but I do remember getting to the hotel and Mamma and Gramp undressing me and talking very loud and with gestures at each other. I slept what seemed a long time, and when I woke up it was morning. Gramp hadn't undressed. There were several dead cigars on the hotel desk. He sat, a defeated old man, very tired, when I went up to him and said, "Mamma rides very well; you don't have to worry about her taking an assen off a horse."

Gramp patted my head and said, "I'm getting old, Stevie. Real old. I'm beginning to think of family manners and morals. I'm beginning to worry over the nest."

"I don't understand."

"When you feel there isn't much to wake up to any more, you feel maybe you can make people see the trouble foolish life can bring. Sari is a wonderful woman and she has you, and a good simple husband, my son, who doesn't really deserve her. But there it is. I've got to bring her back home, safe, unharmed."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

So we started for Palm Beach, and the one-eyed Greek saw us off and gave Mamma a kiss on the hand.

There was supposed to be a road across the swamps skirting Lake Okeechobee, and past the cypress trees. But even the Indians couldn't tell us where it was. We ran into a Seminole Indian family: mom, baby, pet 'gator, pappy, and long lout of a son. Gramp brought our steaming car to a halt and looked over the swamplands. "Heap lost, damn heap lost. Which way Palm Beach?"

The Indian father, smoking a rank cigar, spit and thought a while and said, "Listen, mister, you no get by here. No bottom here, *no* bottom. You sink in, you never get out, by Joe, never."

Mamma watched the flies play on the Indian baby's dirty face and said, "Gramp, we better try farther north."

"By Joe, you better. Got any chewing gum?"

Gramp gave the Indians a tube of toothpaste and we left them eating it, grunting in pleasure, even the pet 'gator taking a mouthful. Farther north it seemed no better. Once we started to sink in the quicksand, but a turpentine-camp crew got us out with mules. At night the gnats ate us, in the day the sun broiled us. But at last we got past Seminole County and down the coast to Vero Beach, where we found a hotel, unpacked and took stock of ourselves and the car. Mamma was not very happy with the bathtub. "Little fish swim in it."

"Shows it's fresh, Sari."

"They bite."

I said, "They just tickle."

We had been living on sandwiches, rancid fruit, and canned fish. But now we dressed and Gramp shaved, letting me hold the newspaper on which he wiped his huge razor, swinging it in the air with such fury that I was afraid he would cut an ear or nose off.

The wonderful thing about Gramp in hunger was that he could find decent food in any town—if there was decent food. At Vero Beach he found a small inn in a brackish salt-water cove where the smart sportsmen came to eat. We had baked

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

crab and fresh garden greens and a big bowl of steamed clams which Gramp showed us how to eat. "You grab 'em by this little black nose and dip them in this melted butter. Then you bite off the nose and chew the rest. Good?"

Refreshed, fed and "feeling no pain," we had the strength to take the road down to Palm Beach. The roads were not what they are today. We blew two tires at Fort Pierce, had spring trouble at Stuart, but when we crossed over to Palm Beach we were feeling the sun and wind. The palm trees and very white sand and very blue sea excited us.

Palm Beach was already trying to look like the south of France. The villas and the palaces were only slightly in bad taste, and many of them were very impressive. Gramp knew many of the owners, and as we passed the walled villas he would describe, like a guide, full of irony:

"Now that million-dollar shack, it was built by a railroad king. He got a million dollars a mile on level ground from the U. S. Mint, six million dollars a mile when he hit the Rocky Mountains. Well, he had his own maps printed and moved the Rocky Mountains fifty miles east; collected mountain scale on level ground. That red house belongs to Old Eagle Beak, oldest oilman in the world. Burned down all the oil wells of rival companies and is learning golf. That wide green place—fat old Kansas countess I knew in Nice. Married a Cherokee Indian who had silver mines under his tepee, millions of dollars of it, and then married a title. And that little blue place, biggest art collector alive, invented steamships with paper bottoms and insured them to the limit. Sank his way into a fortune . . ."

Mamma said, "Really not *nice* people."

Gramp shook his head. "Well, Sari, I don't know. They built the railroads, the big dams, the ships and the tall buildings, the mills and the factories. And when they die they leave it all behind, the money too. No, they'll do a lot of good, even if they don't want to. If you can't steal immortality, stealing isn't worth while."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

Our hotel was fine, flashing in the sun, its red-rose tiles very artistic (I had already read: "A rose-red city half as old as time"), and its lobby very Spanish and gloomy. There were iron staircases that went no place, balconies that couldn't be reached, heavy scarred church furniture, and big clay pots that had been looted from Europe and brought here to dissolve in the too-healthy sunlight.

The next few days we did the town, Gramp pointing out the Gulf Stream, very blue three miles out, and the place where a shipwreck had left a cargo of coconuts which had taken root and become tall, wonderful palms. We were staying at the Royal Poinciana Hotel. Every day at around two o'clock a large fat man would appear, fanning himself with a big fan and often wearing Chinese silk sleeping outfits. He and Gramp used to gather in a few men and play poker till late at night, and Mamma would go out to visit some second-string millionaire.

All in all, I remember Palm Beach with great liking, but even then I sensed it was a way of life dying out. The gambling clubs were still open, the old society queens still fought for the biggest guests, and the scandals were polite but sinister, and often very amusing.

We hadn't intended to go down to Miami Beach, but Gramp wanted to trade some of his Butte copper stock to a man living there, and we drove down for a few days. The man lived on a man-made island inside the bay, and he didn't trade for Gramp's copper stock, but instead tried to sell Gramp some scheme to make filled-in land by pumping sand from the bay. Of course Gramp laughed at the idea (which made millions for others). Gramp in his old age suspected all schemes suggested by other people. Mamma said he had "enough bad ideas of his own to go around."

I swam every day in the deep blue ocean. Miami was already going vulgar but had not yet hit its full zany stride. It was beautiful to see, wonderful in sunlight, and I liked to sit on the white beach and dream those romantic daydreams of childhood,

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

most of which I can no longer remember. Mamma usually sat under a big straw hat and read James Branch Cabell, an author who seems to have had a vogue in those days. Gramp played poker in various hotel rooms until he saw he wasn't going to trade off any of his copper stock. Gramp saw Miami as the well-heeled man's Coney Island, and just about as much fun.

On the piers the great swordfish and barracuda were dying in a glaze of color, as tourists stood with rod and reel and got their pictures taken with fish the captain caught. And blossoming almonds of seventeen walked on good legs in fine hotel lobbies. Already fat mammas, in imitation Paris hats and Hollywood slacks and fox capes, strolled over for a morning orange juice and a fat seeded roll and coffee, and then they stood on the scale and lamented their blubber. Show girls passed in white bathing suits and fox capes ("You just ain't nobody if you got no fox"), and later the few men woke up and sent down for a bromo and a racing sheet and paid the bellboy a half dollar for the errand.

Mamma said the curse of the tropics was not enough men. *Any* kind of men. Thousands of young wives in endless perspective sat on the sands and watched the baby make sand castles. Hundreds of ladies of leisure strutted their stuff at the better-class speak-easies and swimming pools, and men looked them over, very hard to please, "as if sex were an abomination, like war, only more horrible," to quote from one of Mamma's letters.

Gramp sensed it was time to get Mamma home—and one fine day we started north again in our car.



UNCLE PAUL'S HOBBY

THE LONE WAY HOME

COMING NORTH FROM FLORIDA, GRAMP STOPPED THE car on a ridge and waved his cigar at the brass-colored horizon. "I don't know where we are. Like the old Jews in the Wilderness, I had better ask for guiding help from the great big filling station in the sky for this lost tribe."

Mamma, who felt God was too respectable to be mocked like this, said, "Never mind showing off your freethinking. Are we anyplace near Tarheel Bend?"

"I hope so," said Gramp. We were hunting up one branch of the delta of the Savannah for my Uncle Paul's plantation. My Uncle Paul was the lazy one in the family who had made a place for himself in the world by marrying rich women. He made no effort. He just used to comb down his red curly hair, sit around, and, a month or so later, we'd hear he had married

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

some cola heiress or turpentine countess or lumber queen. I met only two of his wives. Both adored him but could not afford to keep him long. Uncle Paul had hobbies that cost a lot of money. Making sweet drinking water from the salt ocean was one. I remember a car he built to run on charcoal, a typewriter that didn't need a ribbon, hybrid turkeys that came in all pastel colors. Oddly enough, most of his hobbies have been perfected by other men. I had no idea what his hobby was at the moment we were lost looking for Tarheel Plantation. (It was named for a kind of black tobacco he was growing that had all its nicotine in the lower discarded leaves, and he was planning to put a safe cigarette on the market. It is to be recorded that he did succeed in making the nicotine-free tobacco—but the stuff was so vile-tasting no one could smoke it with pleasure.)

Mamma was getting tired, and I was getting cold, but before long we turned down a road drenched in night-blooming flowers, past a mock orange tree and white rail fence, beyond which a row of hickory trees led up to a Currier and Ives print of a white plantation house. It was all a mixture of *Gone with the Wind* and a novel by Henry James. Iron statues of colored boys painted in bright red stood with hitching posts by the wide porch, and a man came walking across the polished floor, a hooded hawk asleep on one wrist. I rubbed my eyes; you don't see many hooded hawks any more. The man with the hooded hawk on his wrist came closer and smiled. It was my Uncle Paul, older, but still thin, the red hair retreating into a handsome baldness, a small beard on his chin. The hawk on his wrist stirred, and he said sternly, "Easy, Warlock. Hello, Sari, Uncle, and who's the boy?"

"I'm Stevie," I said. "Is that an eagle?"

"No, a young kestrel. Happy to have you at Tarheel."

"Still playing at games?" Gramp asked of his nephew.

"Hawking, Uncle, is being revived in the South. I'm president of the Southern Hawking Society."

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

"I bet that cost a pretty penny. Damn it, Paul, get us some food and some fire."

The inside of the house was very big and very shiny and overpolished. There were old family pictures, crystal lighting fixtures, and acres of waxed floor. Even I had a feeling this was an expensive, re-enacted stage-set, a façade for a long-dead way of life, but I didn't push the idea. I was hungry.

A small scared-looking young woman came forward dressed in fluffy organdy and wearing heavy cameos at her throat. She held out a thin white arm in which the blue veins showed and said, "Welcome to Tarheel."

Her name was Ginny, and she was Uncle Paul's newest wife. Tarheel was her place, and those were her family looking down at us from the oil paintings on the wall. I don't want to give the impression that Uncle Paul had married into the cream of the Southern families. Ginny was the granddaughter of a half-Indian, half-Yankee carpetbagger who had stolen most of the state, after Lincoln had been shot, and had married the daughter of a ruined family from Peachtree Street in Atlanta. Tarheel was not an old family place but a hog farm, a run-down plantation, when Ginny's father bought it. He rebuilt it and bought good furniture cheaply, getting a lot of stuff at foreclosure sales. When Ginny was left an orphan, she found she was rich, unhappy, and shy. Uncle Paul found her in a Charleston department store one afternoon trying to tell a clerk she wanted a compote pot not a *chamber* pot. Two days later they were married. Ginny made him a very good wife, and she had so much money that he would maybe never run through it all; and so it looked as if this would be his last marriage. (I was wrong.) Anyway, he tore down the place and rebuilt it again.

I have given the full background of Tarheel, not because as a boy I admired it (I did), but because we stayed there a month, and because Tarheel was such a rich background for two rather odd people, neither of whom were what they were trying to be, real ol' Southern family from away back thar.

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

Just before we left Uncle Paul's plantation, Gramp and Mamma and I had to visit for the last time his collection of hunting birds. The golden and fawn-colored birds stared coldly, their cruel, jeweled eyes reflecting us so tiny and unimportant in the live mirrors set in their heads.

Uncle Paul took a small, beautiful hawk from its perch and put it on my gloved wrist. I had by that time learned how to handle a hawk, and the wonderful creature balanced on my wrist and looked at me with contempt, as all hawks do on the human race.

Uncle Paul said, "That's a fine lanneret; I like it even better than a saker or peregrine hawk. I call it Moses. Stevie, I want you to have Moses as a parting gift."

I said, "Oh, Uncle Paul, do you think I can raise a hawk?"

"I've written you out full directions. You'll learn a lot from this hawk. His manners, his habits, are different from that of tamed herd animals. Maybe he'll make something fine out of your life."

Gramp said, "Now, Paul, don't get overrating this; you prefer these damn feather dusters to people. Don't expect Stevie to retreat into the past. You keep wine in the past,*not people."

I always remembered that remark of Gramp's. I think it kept me from resigning from time to time from the human race. For I did own a real hunting hawk named Moses.

Our car was chugging its way home, going north between green fields; it was plain "as the nose on a drunkard's face," said Gramp, "the old car is dying under us." It was true. The car was battered, repaired by hammers, bound with baling wire, soldered, bolted, and patched by a half a hundred blacksmiths, garagemen, and anyone handy or not with a wrench.

It still ran, but it had strange diseases now; it moaned crossing sand roads, it balked and belched blue smoke on damp mornings, it locked wheels crossing railroad tracks, and the steering wheel froze in trolley rails. Gramp had to go out and

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

kick the wheels free when she wouldn't steer. But the car ran. With every rattle we expected it to break down into a few hundred pounds of old junk. But it didn't. We were in Virginia, going by Norfolk and Princess Anne, stabbing for Chesapeake Bay, where Gramp was going to spare the car by having all of us get onto a boat and ride up to Point Centerville. We were trying for Yorktown, where I knew Cornwallis had been holed up by General Washington, but by this time I was sure he was already gone. Gramp wanted to pick up the oyster boat *Harry R.* there, but somehow Yorktown kept evading us. There were many rivers, too many streams, and every farmer had set up a ferry and held out his hand for a dollar. Mamma gave up at Williamsburg.

"Don't bother," she said. "Let me die here on another riverbank. There is no Yorktown, no boat called *Harry R.* I don't even know what my name is."

"Sari," I said, wedging in my hawk's box.

Gramp got down out of the car and went over to a post and tried to make out a tattered poster.

"'County Fair,'" he read. "'Sulky Racing, Plowing Contests, Prize Cattle, Washington Post Road Band.'"

"Any other clues?" I asked.

Gramp read on, "'At Tappenhannock, June fifth, 1896.'"

"Too late," said Mamma, sinking back on the buffalo robe.

"Yorktown," I said finally pointing to a sign saying the same thing. And soon we were rolling down a red-brick-paved street under the grandfathers of all trees. Even the *Harry R.* was at her dock, a dirty old ash-white wreck of a once-great river boat with her old-fashioned smokestacks and some still-remaining shreds of gingerbread decoration. "Like the few remaining teeth in a once beautiful woman," Gramp said sadly. She had big paddle wheels, and we drove right on board.

Steam was hissing and moaning in the vents and whistles, and steam leaked here and there from many rusty pipes. I let my pet hawk Moses sit on my wrist and enjoy the bay breeze.

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

We cast off, and the heavy strokes of the engine beams shook the scarred deck; the paddle wheels began to hurry around and beat up the green water into foam. Barrels of oysters stood around. Two big turtles lay on their backs sighing, and bins of ice held dying deep-sea fish. I was impressed by the eatable treasures of the sea around us and unaware of what a hack they had made of a once-proud river queen. I still remember the turtles sighing and actually weeping real tears. They made fine stew.

A few years later the *Harry R.* blew up with a great shower of red hot iron and fancy woodwork. She died game, in a fury.

We got to Dover, Delaware. In the main I remember it as being like almost every American town between California and New Jersey; it was a style that was first to irk me, then amaze me, and later to impress on my mind the gradual drift of the nation into a pattern of conforming, accepting, and living. The same motion pictures, magazines, the uniform shape of hats, color of ties, size of doughnuts, and sound of slang lived in Broken Wheel, Oklahoma, West Lung, Texas, East Neck, Long Island, and Scatterville, Vermont. In Texas the boots would be high-heeled, in Ohio the hat brims narrower, in Boston the beans drier, and in Florida frying chicken a little too often. But in the main when you had seen one American town, you had seen them all.

The next morning we started north. We crossed Delaware Bay to Cape May, and we tried to get through to the New York house by phone. One of the maids answered and said the family had gone to the summer place in Pittsfield, "up in the Massachusetts." Gramp frowned and shook his head. "We'll never make it. The car is wearing out."

"Let's try," said Mamma. "She can't let us down."

It would only be proper and dramatic if I could say that we ended our great trip across and back over the United States the

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

way we started it, by car. But that was not to be so. We reached Boston and were headed for the Pittsfield farm where the family had taken over Gramp's big white house overlooking one of the Indian-named lakes. But the truth is the car died in Concord in the middle of the main street. One moment we were riding along, then suddenly there was a clatter of iron, a scream of tormented metal; something broke, smashed, and ground itself up under us, and the car no longer lived. We got out, steam and sparks coming from the car.

Gramp swore. "What a place to give up its mangy gasoline soul!"

"The shot fired round the world happened here," I said.

Mamma said, "Stevie, stay away, it's going to blow up!"

It looked as if it would, but it didn't. It was pushed down a Concord side street, and a soiled garageman came over and said, after looking, feeling, and testing with his wrench, "She's dead as a doornail."

Gramp was not a man to waste time on small talk. Like Napoleon he believed in direct action. "What's she worth to you as junk, steel, copper, and brass?"

The man looked at the wreck, kicked at a tire, which at once hissed out air and went flat. "Well, now, ten dollars would be generous."

Gramp said softly, "Twenty dollars and you can show us the way to the railroad station."

"I'm a darn fool," said the man, digging in his pocket for his wallet.

So we came home from the great trip by train. The station at Pittsfield was, as I remember it, red brick. Papa looked dandy in summer linen and a flat straw hat, and an assortment of family, young and old, was standing on the platform as the train pulled in and scattered coal dust over them like a Papal blessing.

Mamma kissed Papa, and Papa shook my hand, as if I were a banker, and said, "My, how brown you all are."

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

Gramp waved his cane and pushed back a few wet-nosed grandchildren. "There seems to be a lot more kids! How is everyone?"

But I could see Gramp was pushing back a tear, and Mamma was weeping into her lace handkerchief, while Papa handed her down to the curb as if she were made of glass. The kids all came to see my pet hawk Moses sit on my wrist, and I spit skillfully from between my front teeth, the way I had learned on the trip. I could see I was impressing the small fry. Everyone said I was taller and would soon need a shave. We all got into the carryall, a big fancy carriage Gramp kept on the farm, and the overflow followed by car.

After our big trip, Gramp spent a lot of time in his big oak bed, reading his favorite books, smoking his cigars, getting up at noon if he felt like it, or just resting all day in bed.

I spent a lot of time with him, and he talked to me of lots of things I didn't understand very well then, and which I no longer remember. I think he wanted to leave something of himself in me, and in the end I think he decided it couldn't be done; that what we can pass on is only the face and features of the tribe, the genes and colors of a clan, but in the end every man makes for himself the fullness and wisdom, or the failure or the nonsense that is his time on earth. So he just read his old classics and grinned at me, the thinning old man in the big wide bed, and I lit his cigars and smuggled in his whisky from the local bootlegger.

In a way he was no longer the Gramp who had been on the trip with us. The energy came back into him for only a little while now; the bones were thrusting sharper through the paling shiny skin. The hand shook when he broke the band on his cigars; the eyes were often half-glazed as he looked from his pillows through the small glass windowpanes out on the summer haying. Perhaps he wondered how much longer he could see his own fields.

Mamma and Papa often sat close together, figuring on bits of

THE BOY IN THE MODEL-T

paper the future, thinking and planning in real estate their hopes, hopes that would never mature and would leave them very little in the end but themselves.

Gramp's birthday was an event that summer. The cook did herself up brown in much fancy cooking. Gramp came downstairs close-shaved, with wing collar and his best cravat with the good black pearl. And he expressed himself about life, the kids, the family—the family—the farm, and the falling off in the flavor of cigars.

There were no candles in the Kentucky Pecan Bourbon Cake, but I had lettered on it in colored icing: *Happy Birthday Gramp, Oh You Kid*. It seemed clever at the time. I had drawn with the same icing a picture of our car and the three of us in it (it was a ten-pound cake) and added: *Excuse Our Dust!*

Gramp cried like a baby and had to be punched on the back when he choked up on a bit of cake. He had to make everybody the genuine Ramos Gin Fizz he had learned to make in New Orleans with the real orange flower water, the powdered sugar, and the rich cream. Everyone said it was a wonderful birthday and we all guessed at how old Gramp really was. He was cursing again and shaky, and Papa and I took him up and put him to bed. I lit his cigar and he looked at me and wiped his eyes and leaned back on the pillows.

"Senectus ipsa est morbus," he said. "It's been a fine day. Even if age with stealing steps has clawed me. I think I'll rest now."

Papa took away the cigar and I pulled out the extra pillows from under his head, and we left him sleeping, after lowering the shades to make a midday twilight in the room.

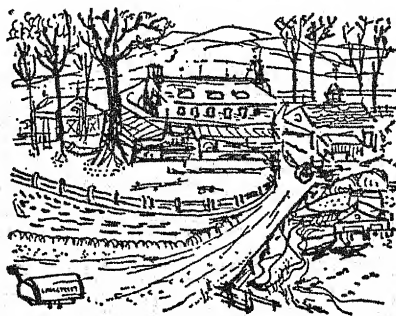
I went out, got my hawk Moses from the barn, and went with him to the top of the big green hill behind the farm. The hawk was no longer tame. He had grown to be a heavy golden bird, his eyes brighter, the great wing feathers mottled and powered by steel muscles. He would beat me black and blue with his

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

blows. He sank his claws into whatever gloves I wore. He would let me handle him, but if I made a false move he would punish me and then sit looking at me like something that knew its full proud worth.

In a way the hawk had brought me into a fuller understanding of life, had stripped from me the illusions, the softness, many of the dreams of children. Life was cruel and tearing, he said to me. But in everything there is beauty, in everything there is a vital life force. Much was not worth bothering with, the hawk said; one must ignore, forget, push aside the soft, the easy, and the dull. One waited for the glorious golden moment of striking, of attaining, of creating the perfect gesture, line, style. The hawk also said that in life style was all, one lived a style of dignity and courage; the rest was dust.

I took off Moses' hood. I untied the leash from his leg. I lifted him high in the air and then I flung him hard as I could off into space. He went high, then came down and circled. I waved him off again. Twice more the hawk came close and I waved him off. Then he spread his wings wide. He shot off into space, pumping himself into the sky. When he was a dot under the crayon-blue vault, I knew I would never see Moses again. I walked slowly down to the farm and I knew I would never see my childhood again either. I had hung the child on the hawk and set it free.



GRAMP'S FARM

The Horse Soldiers

HAROLD SINCLAIR



AN ABRIDGEMENT

The Author

HAROLD SINCLAIR was born on the South Side of Chicago in 1907. He writes of himself: "Lived around various small Illinois towns and on the farm. No formal education to speak of—never made it out of high school. To make up for what I've always assumed was a deficiency, I've read—and still do—everything from Whiz Bang to Toynbee. Always wanted to write—finally did. . . . *The Horse Soldiers* will make the seventh novel. Chief ambition literarywise—to write at least one novel that won't look too bad in company with the best of American writing." Mr. Sinclair now lives in Bloomington, Illinois, with his wife and six children.

THE HORSE SOLDIERS—Harold Sinclair

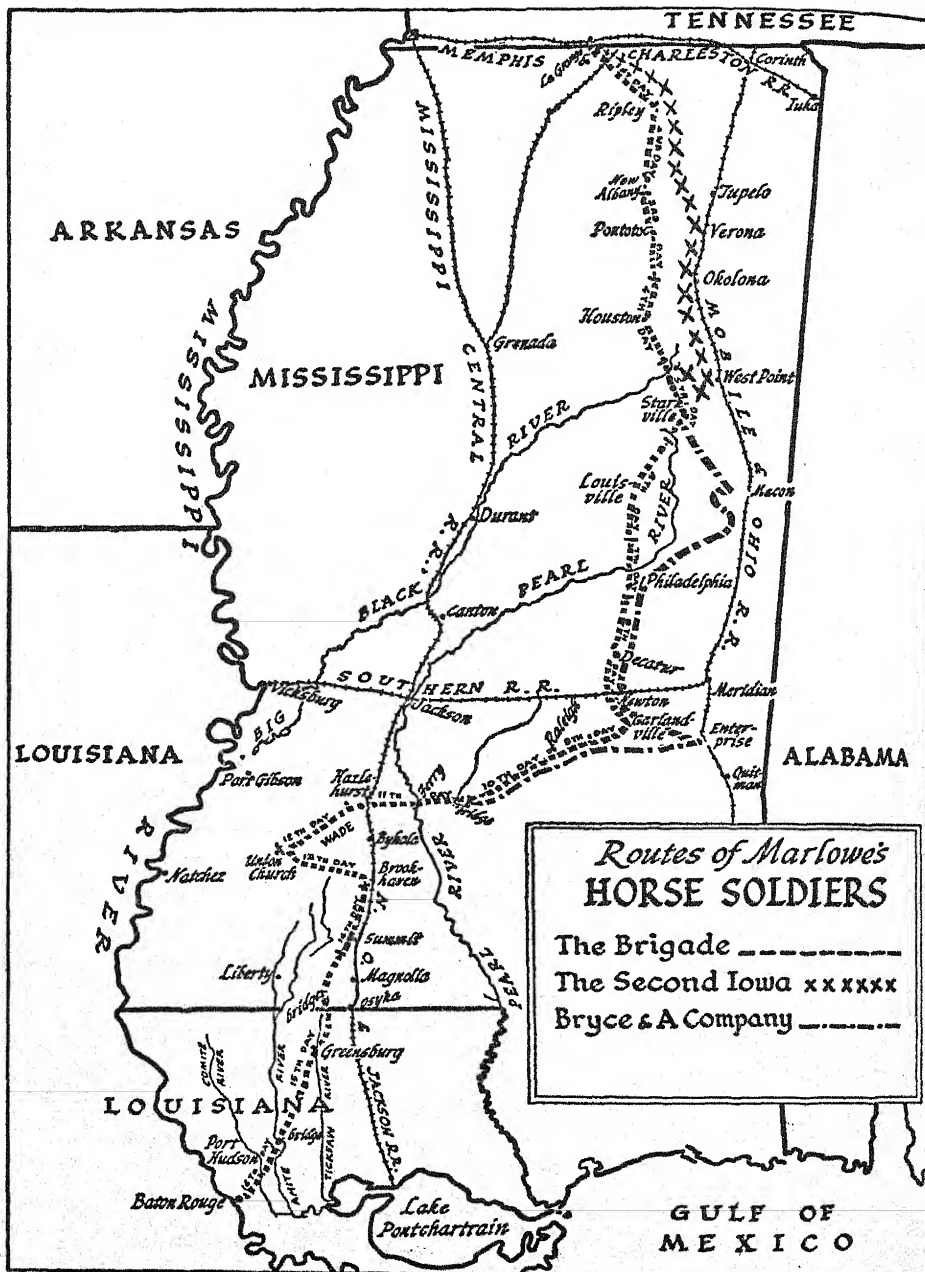
Published by Harper and Brothers

Copyright © 1956 by Harold Augustus Sinclair

Author's Note

This book is fiction, not history, but students of the American Civil War will recognize that it is based on the episode in that conflict generally known as Grierson's Raid. The original brigade, some 1,700 men, was composed of the Sixth and Seventh Illinois and the Second Iowa Volunteer Cavalry, all under the command of Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson. At the time, and according to the army table of organization, a standard cavalry regiment numbered about 1,200 men and three regiments in a brigade would consequently include around 3,600 men. In actual practice, especially by 1863, no brigade commander ever had anything like that many men at his disposal.

In the main body of the story the characters and their names are fictional, although their actions are based on historical records. In those parenthetical chapters generally titled "The Pursuit," the names of those Confederate officers who pursued the real Colonel Grierson so fruitlessly—Pemberton, Richardson, Wirt Adams, Ruggles, Loring, Barteau, De Baun, etc.—are taken from the official records of the original exploit.



Routes of Marlowe's HORSE SOLDIERS

The Brigade -----
 The Second Iowa xxxxxx
 Bryce & A Company

1

Night Talk

The cold nicotine taste suddenly sour in his mouth, Marlowe flung the remains of his tattered cigar through the open window. The gesture was vaguely savage, a physical reflection of his current state of mind.

He thought, with detached bitterness: What a hell of a way to run a war—a notion that had occurred to him at least a thousand times during the past two years. Yet he no longer found any real intellectual solace in this military heresy; the thought had become threadbare from overuse, a sort of wry and certainly not too original personal cliché.

Behind him Smith's chair creaked as the general moved irritably. He said, "By God, Marlowe! I had hoped this would be one time when Hurlbut would put his proposition without going back to Genesis and working up through Fort Sumter. But oh, no! He—"

Marlowe turned from the window and with the impersonal military courtesy which by now had become ingrained habit said, "Beg pardon, sir?" Of course he had been aware of General Smith's voice but had in truth missed the sense of the words.

"I was just saying—"

Hurlbut re-entered the room and resumed his seat at the big paper-cluttered table which served him as desk. Major General Stephen A. Hurlbut was a long way from being the youngest general officer in the Union Army, but at forty-eight he was commander of the Sixteenth Army Corps and the Memphis Military District, outranked by only a handful of men in the West.

With the heartiness of the natural bore Hurlbut said once again, "Well, now, gentlemen, where were we? Oh, yes—" and Marlowe had a violent desire to kick something—hard.

They were here to reach a decision of importance, yes—or at any rate to listen to one. In fact, for this Smith and Marlowe had been summoned in person from Smith's First Division Headquarters at La Grange, fifty miles to the east on the Memphis & Charleston Railroad.

Hurlbut had taken his stance before the big wall map of Mississippi and given them the full picture as of this time, April 3, 1863, including a lecture on the state's geography and topography, most of which they already knew or they wouldn't have been here in the first place.

Union forces held the Mississippi itself from Memphis south and from the Gulf north to the general area between Port Hudson and Vicksburg, the last great Confederate bastion in the west, and about which Grant and Sherman even now were slowly massing all the strength they could bring to bear effectively; they held the Tennessee-Mississippi border east to the Alabama line and beyond, paralleling the Memphis & Charleston Railroad. Beyond the picket points inside this huge right angle they held nothing, but, as Hurlbut put it:

"Right now we don't care. There's nothing much in interior Mississippi that's worth a damn militarily—or any other way to my way of thinking—and what there is will eventually die on the vine. But there is one thing down there that's a lot of bother."

With a finger Hurlbut traced the elementary railroad system of the state. From Memphis southeastward near the center of the state ran the Mississippi Central, at Jackson becoming the New Orleans & Jackson and extending on to the Crescent City; from the Tennessee border south, and holding close to the Ala-

bama line, the Mobile & Ohio, ending at Mobile on the Gulf; running almost straight east out of Vicksburg and bisecting the north-south lines of the two former, respectively, at Jackson and Meridian, was the Southern.

"The damned nuisance," Hurlbut said, "is the Southern—*here*. Ninety per cent of the supplies for Pemberton at Vicksburg are getting to him that way. That's the problem and the proposition, gentlemen, to damage and tear up the line and equipment of the Southern as much as possible. Your First Brigade, Marlowe, is the right force in the right place at the right time."

Hurlbut had plowed on, determined to get it all framed in words. A force of infantry with some artillery would move southward from Corinth, staying close to the M. & O. and the Alabama line. Similar forces would march southeast from Memphis and slightly southwest from La Grange, both angling toward the Mississippi Central where it crossed the Tallahatchie River. All three of these movements would be nothing more than diversions, intended only to draw Rebel strength to the eastern and western sides of the state, leaving the center open and undefended—the planners hoped. These three columns would move far enough south to draw the maximum possible amount of Rebel attention, far enough to make their intentions appear serious—and then withdraw. Giving these others a couple of days to accomplish their diversions and draw fire, Marlowe's First Cavalry Brigade of Smith's First Division of the Sixteenth Corps would then go down through the open center.

Well, it was not too improbable a scheme. With any luck it was quite possible, even probable, that Marlowe would get to and work his pleasure on the Southern Railroad. Getting back, of course, would be another matter entirely.

Smith himself would handle the feint southwestward from La Grange, although he was here now more specifically as Marlowe's immediate superior, military protocol—it was proper to deal with Marlowe as the principal in the plan, but also proper to have General Smith in on the details.

Smith grinned with sardonic relish.

"I wouldn't mind trading places with you, Colonel, though

HAROLD SINCLAIR

to tell the truth it doesn't look to me as though you'd even get a choice between being shot and hung."

"I appreciate that, sir," Marlowe said dryly, "though it's a point that's never worried me much—too academic. I might say, General Hurlbut, that it's a hell of a long ways from La Grange to the nearest point on the Southern—two hundred miles through territory as thick with Rebels as hair on a dog. I'm not thinking so much of the military as of civilians only too willing to carry news."

"Everyone concerned is well aware of that," Hurlbut said a little stiffly. He hesitated, as though searching for precisely the words he wanted. "In all honesty, Colonel Marlowe, there's a little more that could, perhaps even should, be said. You commented on the distance. Did you intend that as an official objection? If you go strictly by the book you might, I say *might*, raise the point that even top authority might not have the right to order such a force into a situation that—er, such a situation. Let's not fool ourselves. I'd be a double damned fool if I deliberately ordered an officer into a thing like this, when and if I knew personally that he had no stomach for it—and no written orders have been issued on it."

It was a delicate and somewhat devious point but it was out in the open now. This was something planned in advance, with deliberate calculation, and if the whole thing turned into a bloody debacle with perhaps nothing accomplished, and the field officer commanding could or would maintain that he had been personally opposed from the beginning—well, the ensuing hell might reach all the way to Washington City. Marlowe couldn't merely acquiesce by silence, not now. He had to speak up and be counted, one way or another.

"Oh, I'm absolutely all in favor, sir!" he said quickly. "I'd hate to miss the chance to handle it. On the other hand, it seems only common sense to weigh the pros and cons."

"Certainly—in fact, the only thing to do. I might say, gentlemen, that while General Grant didn't originate this idea, this precise plan that is, he is interested personally and has made several specific suggestions. Vicksburg is proving to be consid-

erably more of a problem than was thought at first, and—well, every bit of extra pressure will be useful. You understand, Marlowe,” Hurlbut went on, “your one and only objective is the Southern Railway, and you are not to engage if it can possibly be avoided. You can’t hope to gain by battle, other than to perhaps shake off minor forces. And trouble attracts trouble, you know.”

“I’m aware of that, sir. But the meat of it’s in that phrase, ‘If it can be avoided.’ That’s partly what I had in mind when I spoke of two hundred miles being a long way. We can propose; they may dispose. With your permission, I’d like to have a couple of matters definitely understood, sir.”

“Well?”

“I know my men, at any rate those in my own First Illinois. Every last one is a volunteer and with few exceptions they’re all veterans. A few have already done some time in Rebel prison camps and they don’t care for any more of that. If we should get in a hole I wouldn’t deny them the chance to save their own necks. I doubt very much that I could.”

“Well, no,” Hurlbut agreed. “It’s a thing we don’t dwell on too much, but when you get down close enough to fundamentals it’s the individual soldier who finally makes his decision as to whether to fight or quit. He may be influenced by orders or the example of others, but he finally has to decide whether to throw away his rifle or keep on using it. These are imponderables. You’ll undoubtedly run into some trouble; that, I suppose, we can take for granted. The thing is not to go looking for it en masse. Nobody requires miracles of you, Colonel, but above all you’re not going down there with the primary intention of fighting. You’d be more useful doing that at Vicksburg.”

“I appreciate that, though I’ll probably need a miracle in the personal sense, General. This further question occurs to me. I’ve always figured that a man shouldn’t deliberately gamble unless he could afford to lose—or at any rate was prepared to, and there’s no denying that this is a long gamble. Is Army Headquarters prepared to stand the loss of a full cavalry brigade?”

Hurlbut looked out the window toward the dark flowing river. Near the midstream channel a fully lighted gunboat churned its cumbrous way north—this was Union water and there was little need for caution these days.

"I wouldn't say they're quite prepared to take it for granted in advance," Hurlbut said. "But once on your way there won't be any choice—I mean from this end, and any military move is a gamble up to a point. That's the best answer I can give you, Colonel."

"Then I reckon it'll have to do, sir."

Hurlbut moved heavily in his chair, fumbled in a table drawer, and came up with a fresh cigar. "There is one other little point we haven't touched on, gentlemen. Assuming that you make it to the line of the Southern, Marlowe, then you should swing to your left and plan to make your way back generally by way of western Alabama."

Marlowe came erect like a suddenly uncoiled spring and erupted an almost explosive "No!" His mind had been ranging far ahead of their talk and now a sense of outrage, the outrage of plain common sense, welled in him. "As I see it, General, if we manage to get that far we will have stirred up all of Central Mississippi in the process. There'll be nothing to do but go on. I just don't see any other possible way, sir!"

"Go on?" Hurlbut looked at the colonel as though the latter had taken leave of his senses. "Go on where, sir?"

"To wherever I can, or have to—there'll be no knowing until I get there. Even if these feints up here work—and I think they will in the beginning—how long is it going to take the Johnnies to find out—guess—what I'm really up to? Four days? Five or six? Good God, General! If I can even manage to move a thousand men two hundred miles in *seven* days, if I don't have to fire a gun, it will be a near miracle. And once the word is out every Reb in Mississippi will be out to get us. No, I don't dare try to come back. All I *can* do is try to keep ahead of 'em."

"I don't see it," Hurlbut said stubbornly.

Marlowe glared hard at the floor. He held himself to be no

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

tactical genius, but a ten-year-old could see that with a minimum of luck anybody could get himself into this bear trap; the trick would lie in getting out.

"I've given this a lot of thought, Marlowe, believe me, and I know Alabama's your best bet. You'll be doing the unexpected, throw 'em off balance—double back. That'll do it."

"Head into Alabama, yes, maybe, if I have to. But as I see it, it will be near suicide to try and double back—"

Smith, with a minimum of motion, finally got up and drifted unobtrusively to the window.

Very coldly Hurlbut said, "Are you deliberately questioning my judgment in this, Colonel Marlowe?"

At the window Smith nodded at Hurlbut's broad back and shook his head violently.

Marlowe felt the rising tide of futility. "Oh, certainly not, sir. It's only that—" He hesitated, momentarily hunting for the right phrase.

"Only what, Colonel?"

With an effort Marlowe rearranged his face and took in a deep breath. "Obviously we both recognize the problem, General. Possibly it's just that we're approaching it from opposite points of view." It sounded as though it made some sort of sense but for the life of him Marlowe at the moment couldn't have explained just what the sense was.

"Hmm. Possibly. Once you're on your way," Hurlbut said a bit more warmly, "you will of course have to use a good deal of discretion, but I must insist on this point. You'll find I'm right, Colonel."

Marlowe wondered if the general actually believed a word of that, or whether he was just acting like a general, but he said, "You'll put these details in writing, sir?"

"Oh, yes, certainly, when we reach that stage. I wanted this talk to iron out the details. The official orders will of course be sent through General Smith here."

"Of course, sir," Marlowe said woodenly.

Hurlbut rose abruptly—he could reach a stopping point when he put his mind to it. "I don't think it will be necessary

HAROLD SINCLAIR

to have you and General Smith here again in person. You, or at any rate General Smith, will hear from me. I'll wish you luck, Colonel."

One of the things a field army produces in quantity is rumor. Even in the most sanguinary of wars an army does more waiting than fighting, and speculation serves to pass the time, provide a fresh topic for talk, and somewhat alleviate the universal boredom. And sometimes, of course, the rumors actually have a basis in truth.

The present flutter in the First Brigade was set afoot by several minor but apparently related occurrences. To begin with Colonel Marlowe had gone to Memphis, Corps Headquarters, with General Smith, on official business it was said. Then shortly after his return the colonel had issued orders that the shoeing of every mount in the brigade was to be checked, and to be repaired or replaced as warranted. In addition all equipment, with special reference to arms and leather accouterments, was to be put in first-rate order, subject to a general inspection to follow.

The brigade nodded its collective head and agreed that it all added up to something more than the usual monotonous routine of the past winter.

Sergeant Nate Brown sat with his back propped comfortably against the trunk of a live-oak tree, a hundred yards or so from the tent lines which housed the First Illinois Cavalry. He chewed his wad of cut plug industriously and from time to time cocked an eye at the stringy private working the bellows of the portable forge.

Brown watched the youth at the bellows almost paternally—he was really fond of him. A farm boy, Private Ed Stumm had hardly been ten miles from home when, shortly after that hell on earth at Shiloh, he had enlisted in Company A of the First. With innocent and grave composure he told Captain Bryce that he had come to take the place of his brother Harry, killed in the first Rebel onslaught that peaceful (up to then) Sunday morning. Nobody doubted his good intentions for a

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

moment—these solemn recruits were often that way in the beginning. Captain Bryce, equally straight-faced, said, "Any more of you Stumms at home in case we need 'em?" Ed said, "Yes, sir—two, except they ain't as old as I am an' Paw didn't want to send 'em just yet." And nobody doubted that that was the truth either. He'd made a good soldier, in the estimation of his fellows, and that was what counted.

At the bellows Private Stumm gradually eased off and finally came to a complete stop. He removed his battered and dusty hat and raked sweat from his brow with a finger.

Without moving a fraction of an inch the sergeant said, "God damn it, kid, I told you to keep that fire jumpin'!"

"I know, Sarge, I know, but what in hell for? You ain't gonna hot up any shoes till Murphy and Pete get here with 'em. Don't get in an uproar—the heat'll hold awhile."

But having delivered his order the sergeant made no effort to follow it up, nor had he intended to. "Yeah, an' that reminds me—where in hell are they?" It was really a rhetorical question, the sergeant not being vitally interested in an answer at the moment. "They been gone long enough to haul a load o' shoes clean from Memphis."

Being thus reprieved, if only by omission, Private Stumm pulled a fresh blade of grass and chewed it softly, thoughtfully, countryman fashion. "Nice weather, Sarge. It kinda gets you thinkin'. Back up home my old man'll be plowin' about now if it ain't too wet. I never figgered to see the day when I'd downright hanker to watch the hind end of a span o' mules on a plow. But I dunno—"

"Homesick, kid?"

"Naah. I was maybe a little at first but I got over it. It ain't anything like that. It's just that—well, seems like a man ought to work if he's able. Anyhow, I was raised that way."

"Great jumpin' Christ! You mean to tell me you ain't gittin' enough work to suit you?" The sergeant's eyes suddenly glowed with sinister interest.

"Oh, there ain't no shortage o' work. I reckon I mean a man ought to be doin' somethin' *useful*."

HAROLD SINCLAIR

On that one the sergeant shifted his cud to the other jaw and for once didn't come back with the instantaneous retort. In a fumbling kind of way the boy had, you might say, made a fair commentary on the whole business of war.

But having gotten the sergeant off the all-important subject of work in hand, Stumm said, "Whatta you reckon the Old Man's up to, Sarge?"

Colonel Jack Marlowe, a venerable thirty-six years of age, was of course and inevitably the Old Man.

"Well, he ain't consulted me about it yet. Course he will—the same time he tells the rest of whoever's goin'. But jokin' to one side, it'll probably be Vicksburg; anyway, that's the smart guess. The word is that Grant's havin' his troubles down there an' we might be elected—we sure ain't doin' any good here. The God-damn' horse calvary," Sergeant Brown added reflectively, and relieved his mouth.

Marlowe crumpled the brief note brought by the orderly, tossed it on the ground and mangled it still further under a boot-heel. The note had read:

Sorry, but still no official orders. Have been prodding Hurlbut as much as prudent but so far without result. Will let you know instant when there is anything. Regards.

Smith.

Marlowe disliked to push General Smith, even in the most polite manner—it was poor general procedure, for one thing. And Smith too in this was only an intermediary and obviously couldn't pass on something he didn't have. But to Marlowe the waiting was becoming intolerable.

From a field locker at the foot of his cot he took a half-empty bottle of whisky and poured himself a long drink. He started to put the bottle back, changed his mind, shrugged, and poured a second round as hefty as the first.

In the sprawling Union Army of 1863 almost any kind of human equation could be found, but even so John Francis Marlowe was a somewhat unique variation. For most men (aside from the relative handful of Regulars) the war was an

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

interruption of their normal lives. But for Marlowe the beginning of the war coincided almost exactly with the ending of a special period in his own life. All the ten years of his marriage he had been in love with Elaine, both romantically and realistically, but during the last three years of it she had obviously been ailing, and seriously. Of course she made light of it at first, belittled it as something unimportant that would presently pass away, and later tried gallantly to conceal it, until that too had become physically impossible. The doctors—he'd had a whole bevy of the best available—had been baffled, and in the end it was agreed that the only thing which *might* help—and they stressed the *might*—was a complete change of climate and surroundings. Marlowe had privately doubted that such treatment would help, yet he could see no alternative and was at a point where he would have tried anything short of sheer witchcraft. Accordingly he had liquidated a very prosperous grain-handling business, had sold his house and other property, most of their less personal household goods, and his horses—and then Elaine had died. One night they had been discussing train and steamer arrangements. The next morning he had gone to her room as usual and found her dead.

It was as starkly simple as that—and as emotionally stunning.

Quite aside from the emotional turbulence, Marlowe overnight was set almost completely adrift as a man can be. There were no children to make paternal demands on him. From what he would always think of as the best ten years of his life, he had left only himself and an impressive but impersonal row of figures in a bankbook.

So for John Marlowe, the outbreak of the war, in the limited personal sense, had been providential. He devoted himself to making war with a singleness of purpose unmatched by most of his colleagues in arms. He didn't consider this, even privately, as any great patriotic virtue—he simply had little else to occupy him. This was anything but a professional army, in fact it was probably the greatest *non*professional army ever assembled. Wives, children, sweethearts, the prosperity of the fam-

HAROLD SINCLAIR

ily farm, business matters back home, occupied a part of almost every soldier's mind. But not Colonel Jack Marlowe's. He was dedicated to the prosecution of the war simply because he had no other more urgent personal purpose.

With this motivation, another man might have become a military martinet, a Fourth of July patriot, or one of those civilians-cum-soldiers infatuated with the surface trappings of war but singularly unconcerned with its vital prosecution. To the good fortune of the First Illinois Volunteer Cavalry, and later Smith's First Cavalry Brigade of the First Division, Marlowe was none of these things. He had a direct sort of mind, the faculty of separating immediate issues and treating them according to their relative importance.

The men of the First might slouch in their saddles, in fact they usually did, and they often wore and transported astonishingly nonregulation equipment. But they ate the best that was available, their pay was on time as often as Marlowe could manage it, their horses were shod and shabby equipment replaced, they had never yet given a foot of ground except by specific order, and any man who believed he had a grievance could take his case directly to the colonel. There he could expect to get justice, although not necessarily always the sort he had in mind.

In common with hundreds of his amateur colleagues Marlowe had read that Bible of the Union Army, Hardee's *Tactics*—but he had promptly given his away. Hardee's theories, as far as he could see and according to his growing experience, had little relationship to a war, catch-as-catch-can, collar-and-eyebrow style, being fought in this sixth decade of the nineteenth century through the middle and lower South. Whether in spite of this or because of it the First would cheerfully have followed him to hell if the orders read that way—or even to West Texas. They would have grouched and cursed the day they enlisted in the con-demned cavalry, which they did all the time anyway, but they would have gone.

It was only during long periods of inaction, of doing abso-

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

lutely nothing of discernible value, of waiting, waiting on some distant decision, that Marlowe was seized with this feeling of literally sickening futility. To him the philosophy of the average soldier, "Well, at least you ain't bein' shot at," was altogether irrelevant. (He assured himself that these moments of black melancholy had nothing whatever to do with the loss of Elaine, but he was not really certain of this.)

It was only at times like this that Marlowe turned to the dubious satisfaction of the bottle. He was fully aware of its flaws but—well, there it was and at the moment there seemed to be nothing better. His juniors could have sworn they had never seen him even slightly under the influence, and they would have been dead right, but he drank for all that, sometimes, steadily and with grim concentration . . .

He leaned against the pole in his open tent doorway and fumbled absently in an inner pocket for a fresh cigar. The sharp edge of futility was gone, momentarily floated away on the drinks. Beyond the end of the long company street he could see the small cloud of dust and smoke, the orderly confusion, of Sergeant Brown's temporary horseshoeing establishment. By now Brown would probably have just about finished with the First. He smiled with faint grimness. At least they'd be ready, even if they never had any place to go.

General Smith's headquarters were in a not very pretentious two-story frame house in La Grange proper. The thin yellow light from the hanging lamp threw Smith's craggy features into shadowy relief, as he indicated the confusion of papers before him. "They say even mountains move, Marlowe. General Hurlbut finally did too. I suppose you've guessed?"

"More or less," Marlowe agreed. "But you never know."

Over his steel-rimmed spectacles Smith eyed him shrewdly. "All right, let's get down to cases. I'll give it to you exactly as I see it. Ordinarily, I wouldn't mind showing you Hurlbut's orders, in fact I'd certainly rather—save me repeating it all. But this way you can swear, if you ever have to—which I

HAROLD SINCLAIR

hope you won't—that your instructions came solely from me and naturally that's all you know. There's been no change in the general plan, that's all here in the orders I have written out for you. Now as to this business of coming back, assuming you do—" Smith hesitated, grinned. "We might as well get it straight between us. To me the point is that you get back, or out, and I personally don't give a damn how you do it or where you have to go—go by way of Texas if you have to. Once you're gone from here you're strictly on your own. Hurlbut may think he can risk the loss of a full brigade for the sake of a pet notion—of course he doesn't think of it that way—but I'm damned if I'm going to help him do it."

"Fair enough. I simply can't see it except as playing it the way the cards fall."

"Neither can I. If you manage to get through and out you'll be a genius and nobody will question how you did it. If you don't—well, you'll sure be out of reach of criticism for a while. If they have to blame somebody—and by God! as usual they will—they can have me. Let's leave it at that." Smith picked up papers from a pile and glanced over them. "Well, here's another one you may not care too much for, but don't go off half-cocked. You're to take rations for five days—"

"Oh, now wait a minute—begging your pardon, General, but somebody can't count. Why, if I do better than thirty miles a day, which you know is one hell of an average for that distance, without any opposition and with good weather, it will still take me better than six full days even to reach the Southern."

Smith leaned back in his chair. "Keep your shirt on, Marlowe. I know what's in your mind well enough but let's take another look at it. To begin with, cavalry rations means men *and* horses. Right? So put it like this—suppose you double that, make it ten days, but you end up being gone fifteen days, or longer. You still have to eat off the country a third of the time because you haven't any choice, but you've saved the original weight at the time when it's probably the most important. How long *will* you be gone anyway, Marlowe?" he added craftily.

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

"Why, nobody," Marlowe said, taken by surprise, "could answer that. You know, sir—"

"Certainly I know—that's just the point. It comes down to this. You're going to have to live off the country sooner or later, so make it sooner and save yourself the load."

Marlowe hesitated, then said, "I see. Well, maybe I did jump to conclusions a mite too fast." Right or wrong in this, Smith was on his side in general and there was no sense in antagonizing him over a relatively minor point. "There's one other important thing, important to me anyway. When do we go?"

"Oh, Lord, yes—that. Well, it's like this . . ."

The fainting columns, including that of Smith himself from here at La Grange, would leave the next day. Being mostly infantry with a scattering of artillery, they would be slow. The First Brigade would leave two days later, the morning of the seventeenth.

"Well, anything I've left out you'll have to make up as you go along," Smith said finally, "and I imagine there'll be a lot of it. Have a drink before we end this, Colonel?"

Marlowe said, more or less automatically, "Why yes sir, thanks," although he didn't really care whether he had a drink or not. Now that the proposition had been resolved the tension had abated and he felt fine. Still, there were the amenities. One drink then led almost inevitably to another (it was excellent whisky; Smith said it had come down the river from the Planters House in St. Louis), and they talked a little, mostly for the sake of talk, with neither saying what was foremost in his mind. There is always an inescapable reticence, along with the loneliness, in the very nature of command.

Smith rose abruptly and held out a hand. "I'll say good-by, Colonel. I'll be getting out early in the morning myself. If you bring this off you'll be one of the biggest men in the army, temporarily anyway. If you don't . . . well . . . I'll wish you luck, Jack."

"I'll see you later, General, somewhere—as you say, with luck."

2

Staff Meeting

Since there was hardly room in Marlowe's tent the staff meeting was held outside in the shade of a gnarled and ancient water oak. He always tried to keep these things as simple as possible, but even so it was quite a gathering. The list included Major Dick Gray, presently commanding the First Illinois Cavalry in Marlowe's place; Colonel Secord of the Second Illinois; Colonel Blaney of the Second Iowa; their respective juniors who had a right to be there; and Majors Keller and Wells, surgeons respectively of the First and Second Illinois.

"If you gentlemen will bear with me in our usual manner," he began, "I'll try to cover the situation as completely as I can. No interruptions, please. When I've finished, then as many questions or comments as you please—well, within reason."

He knew these people, in the sense of their command ability and past performance—he considered that the only part of their lives which really concerned him. He knew the shortcomings of each one, which on the whole were minor—no more than to be expected in a generally imperfect world. None was brilliant in the military sense, or at least the brilliance hadn't shown up yet; all were competent. In general he would not

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

have exchanged them for any similar group he knew of—better, in his view, to have a junior whose faults were known than one with a surface brilliance but hidden flaws to show up in a time of crisis.

He knew in advance what their individual reactions would be when he had outlined the situation and what was to be done. Major Gray would contribute a flippant remark, harmless enough in itself, to show his own nonchalance and cover what remained of his own unsureness. As long as Gray had been second in the regiment (Lieutenant Colonel Kelsey, the nominal second, had gone home on sick leave and never returned) his had been a sort of what-the-hell, I-only-take-orders-here attitude. But when he was given acting command of the First a good deal of this attitude had vanished, or at least been sublimated, and he had tried hard to live up to his larger responsibility.

Blaney of the Second Iowa would ask a question or two which would be really more of a statement, framed to demonstrate publicly that he had the situation thoroughly in mind. Blaney was ten years older than Marlowe, a reasonably good colonel of regiment who neither merited higher command nor wanted it, the kind of man who actually enjoyed the median position he knew he could manage without too much strain.

Secord would say little or nothing—whatever he might say would be terse and to the point. A good officer, a little over-cautious at times, perhaps, but solidly dependable. Marlowe had learned from experience that, as long as it was humanly and militarily possible, Secord would have the Second Illinois in the right place at the right time.

So it would be with the others, each according to his particular personality bent. . . .

"So there you have it, gentlemen," the colonel said finally. "As I said in the beginning, you're entitled as usual to any reasonable and pertinent questions or comments. Only one thing—we're not going to gain much by irrelevant discussion as such. Your guesses as to what happens when we leave here,

HAROLD SINCLAIR

for instance, are just as good as mine, maybe better, and speculation on that will be largely a waste of our time. Well?"

"No particular questions, at least not now," Major Gray said, running more or less true to form, "but I've been thinking while you gave us this—maybe this is better than playing the role of stalking horse for General Grant at Vicksburg."

Marlowe shrugged indifferently. "A matter of opinion, I suppose. Yes, Secord?"

Colonel Frank Secord waved a big hairy hand. "No question as to procedure, Colonel, but I wonder—technically, of course, this isn't any of my business, I'm just curious—does Memphis understand what kind of a bear trap they're shoving us into down there?"

"They know," Marlowe said a little grimly, "and they've weighed the chances—or so they say. But once we're on our way that'll be all up to us. What about you, Colonel Blaney?"

Blaney fingered his wispy beard nervously—at least a stranger might have thought it was nervousness. You couldn't—and Marlowe knew this—always be sure about Blaney. "Just one thing in particular," Blaney drawled disarmingly. "You've got the Second Iowa—me—picked as the regiment to pull out and double back . . ."

In his discourse Marlowe had explained that, somewhere along the line, probably four or five days out—at any rate at his discretion, one of the brigade's three regiments would turn back. This was intended to lighten and speed up the remainder of the column and at the same time provide a screen to hold off and confuse possible pursuit. The Second Iowa had been named specifically.

". . . Is there some special reason for that? By God! I'd hate to have it suggested that the Second can't stand up alongside anybody—!"

"Nonsense, Colonel," Marlowe said blandly. "There's no such inference. As a matter of fact, Colonel," Marlowe went on, "I think you're looking at it in the wrong way. The regiment that comes back will in effect be an independent command, a matter of considerable responsibility."

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

"All right," Blaney said. "That's good enough—we don't hanker to be heroes either."

Sometimes Blaney for some reason struck Marlowe as being slightly ridiculous, and at the same time he was a little ashamed of the feeling, for certainly there was nothing inherently ridiculous about a man defending his country. "Anybody else?"

There was a little more, of course, but nothing important.

"There is one other thing I've left until now," Marlowe said finally. "That concerns the presence here of Majors Keller and Wells. I needn't remind you that as a rule we don't bother the medics with the details of brigade procedure."

Wells and Keller, brothers in the private fraternity of medicine, glanced briefly at each other and away. "I wondered," Keller drawled, "just why we were being so honored."

"I wouldn't put it quite in that way," Marlowe said. He tossed away his dead cigar, took his time about getting out a fresh one and setting it alight. Let them wait. They had all morning. Like a great many medical men in this army, they were in it but not too much of it. Necessarily of officer status, they held no direct command responsibility.

He said, "Would either of you gentlemen, Keller or Wells, care to make a general statement about the physical condition of the men? I'll explain what I'm getting at directly."

"The sick report is made up every day—" Keller began.

"If I'd wanted that," Marlowe interrupted icily, "I'd have said so. I asked for a general statement."

Keller started to say something, then shrugged and apparently changed his mind. "Very well—if I understand you correctly, Colonel. On the whole, the health of the men is about what you'd expect in any similar group—probably a bit higher than the average. I'm speaking of the First, of course, my own charge, but I'm surmising the others would run about the same. In a group as large as a regiment you find the usual quota of aches and pains, some mildly serious, some imaginary, about what you'd expect in a similar civilian group. Always barring pregnancy, Colonel—we don't have that to contend with."

Marlowe went along with the general laughter as far as

HAROLD SINCLAIR

thin smile—but no further. There wasn't much to be done about Keller—not that he especially wanted to do anything—and he seemed to be as competent as most of these butchers.

"Is that what you had in mind, Colonel?" Keller said.

"More or less, I suppose." Marlowe rather wished now he had approached this a little differently. "Anyhow, the principal point is this. If this were a routine move of the whole brigade every man would go and we'd make allowances for the ailing, if any. But this is in no way a routine move and there will be allowances for no one—above all we can't be bothered with nursing cripples or sick men. I want you surgeons to strike from the duty roster every man who is ailing in the slightest now, and every last one who in your judgment is likely to become so in the near future."

"I think we get the general idea, Colonel," Keller said almost disinterestedly, "but we're doctors, not fortunetellers or prophets."

"By God! How well I know that!" Marlowe's hitherto calm voice crackled with sudden incisive bitterness. For an instant the memory of Elaine was there in his mind like a searing pain. "But you're also supposed to have what you people call medical insight. I've heard the God-damned phrase so often it gives me a personal pain in the rump, but it's your phrase, not mine!"

Keller's lips set in a straight line and the others appeared a little embarrassed. Of course there was really nothing sacred about the surgeons. There was no reason why a general officer couldn't tell them anything he saw fit, but the fact was they were seldom, if ever, put over the jumps in public—it just wasn't done.

"I don't want a wholesale release from duty, we can't stand it for one thing. But a week from now, when we may be trying to stand off a couple of Rebel divisions, I damned well don't want to be nursing sick men who'll claim they've had it coming on for *two* weeks. That's the point I'm making and I'm putting it up to you two. I haven't included Blaney's Second Iowa because they'll be coming back in a few days anyway."

"Very well," Keller said stiffly, "but in that case you'll have to accept our opinions. That's a matter of professional judgment and also something which can't be measured by army regulations."

"I thought that's what I said," Marlowe said more mildly, "and technically I have to accept your judgment every time you put a man on the roster with a bellyache. Well, that's all for the present, gentlemen."

The colonel leaned on the saddle pommel and watched as the loose column evolved out of apparent chaos and moved off down the road toward Ripley. Good men, these, he thought. Perhaps not the best in the army—though what really is "best" in that sense?—but good enough, not flamboyant but solid and dependable.

The spring morning was all anyone could ask—even as Marlowe watched the day came to full light. He had enjoyed his breakfast, the first cigar of the day was drawing well, and now that they were actually moving the nervous tension was gone. From here on, until it finally ended, all he had to do was concentrate on the direction of this maneuver. It was a game of chess with a presently invisible opponent, in which he would make one move at a time, with due allowance for the one expected to follow.

With him now were his own aide, Lieutenant Jay Davis, who enjoyed a fairly soft job because Marlowe chose to attend to so many chores himself; and the orderly, Sergeant King.

This First Brigade of some 1,500 men was not large as cavalry strength was counted in this army, yet at the same time 1,500 is a considerable lot of men and horseflesh anywhere. In files of three, which was about all this narrow country road would accommodate comfortably, the column extended for a minimum of a mile and a quarter. When men and animals began to slacken off a little the column would lengthen still more. The effective and orderly manipulation of a column this size, just in the physical sense, is no job for an amateur. Marlowe

HAROLD SINCLAIR

had more than once seen the disastrous results of mishandling cavalry—some of the chaos at Shiloh had been one shining example—which could create more havoc than the enemy.

He watched the column now with an eye at once that of a merely interested spectator and a professional cavalryman—in two years these men too had moved from amateur to professional status. Legend grew slowly in this western army but it did grow—and Marlowe was proud of the fact that this (technically) First Cavalry Brigade of General Smith's First Division of the Sixteenth Army Corps was known in this whole area simply as Marlowe's Cavalry. Even if he didn't have the star he had the brigade. Yesterday they had stood a final full-scale inspection—Marlowe had gone down the lines himself with the regimental officers—and he knew they were ready for what he would have to ask of them—it would be a great deal. They were fit—the surgeons had weeded out perhaps two dozen doubtful cases. They were carrying forty rounds of ammunition per man and five days' rations. They had orders now to make the rations do double duty, that is rations for five days were supposed to last ten. Enough, say, to make a round trip to Columbus, Mississippi, from which point the Confederate General Dan Ruggles now and then raided the Union positions along the Memphis & Charleston Railroad. On the face of it it was a good enough guess—they would be deep in the heart of Mississippi before they discovered how wrong it was. The knowledge already hung on Marlowe's mind like a great weight, one that he would have to carry alone.

The long column vanished into the forest to the south like a gigantic blue serpent, though hardly with serpent stealth. Six thousand-odd shod hoofs, together with the casual talk of the riders, can make a powerful lot of noise in rural stillness. These same 6,000 hoofs, even at a walk, churn any dry dirt road into a cloud of thick dust (in fact, the road was already a full inch deep with the yellow-red dust) moving in unison with the column. From Marlowe on down this didn't annoy anyone too much at the moment. The important thing was that they were on the move.

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

The brigade was stretched out, more or less at rest, for three quarters of a mile and drawn back into the scattered pine growth for a distance of fifty yards or so. He couldn't see them, but Marlowe knew sentries patrolled the dark, narrow road at regular intervals.

This was the first full day the colonel himself had spent in the saddle for months, and while he was tired and very aware of his bottom fatigue he was hardly exhausted. Now he half-reclined on the ground, supporting himself with one elbow on the folded saddle blanket, which in turn was draped over the saddle seat.

They had this day covered about twenty actual miles, in some ways not too bad but also not good—in fact, much less than good. Marlowe thought a little grimly of General Hurlbut and his five days' rations. At this rate it would take ten days merely to reach the line of the Southern—and that was far, far too long.

He sat upright and said sharply, "Davis!"

"Yes sir," the lieutenant answered immediately.

"A little business here for you to attend. You can manage the first part directly—I mean it won't be necessary for you to go through Major Gray—I'll explain to him. Now this is for Captain Landry, D Company of the First. Tomorrow morning I want three men out in front of the column as a point—about a quarter mile out. And I want them in an approximation of civilian clothes—where and how they get 'em is up to them and Landry. They ought to manage something around this village up ahead. Now Landry is to put this strictly on a volunteer basis—he'll still get plenty of men. But tell him for God's sake to pick some with their wits about them. Is that clear enough?"

"Well, yes sir, only—" Davis hesitated.

"Only what?" Marlowe said sharply.

"I was only going to mention that—well, if they should get taken in civilian clothes it could be their necks, literally. Of course, sir—"

"When I want you to explain the so-called rules of war," Marlowe interrupted wearily, "I'll ask you, Lieutenant! Landry knows that as well as I do—maybe even as well as you do—and

HAROLD SINCLAIR

he is to explain it to his volunteers. I was getting around to that when you undertook to advise me. But before you see Landry ask Major Gray to report here to me. I'll send King after the others but you'll be up there by Gray at the head of the line anyway. *Now is it clear?*"

"Yes sir," Davis said woodenly.

When Davis had gone it was Sergeant King's turn. "You through with your supper stuff, Sergeant?"

"Yes sir. Nothin' to clean except the skillet and our coffee cans, Colonel."

"All right. Then my compliments to Colonel Blaney and Colonel Secord, and ask them to see me here as soon as convenient."

In something like twenty minutes the regimental commanders were on hand.

"Sorry to bother you with this, gentlemen," Marlowe said. "I know you need your sleep, we all do. But this had to be said and I thought now was the time and place to do it. The point is this—today we made a bit over twenty miles and that's simply not good enough, not by more than 50 per cent. I'm not especially complaining now as such, you understand, I'm simply stating a fact. Well, we can't change what we did today but from now on we'll damned well have to do better as well as making up for today."

"Oh, I don't know, Jack—you always have to make allowances for a first day," Blaney said. His voice was bland, unexcited, yes, perhaps even a little fatherly.

Marlowe's voice also was calm but harsher now. "I said we'd have to do better, a lot better, and that stands. You know what regulation procedure is—three miles an hour even allowing men and animals a breather. You know what I think of some regulations, but there's nothing wrong with that one. We were out of La Grange at six this morning and on the road for something over twelve hours. It adds up to thirty-six miles and we actually made a little over twenty. You have to understand, and make the men understand, that speed is the only thing that can keep us out of trouble. If we're ever going to make time it's got to be

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

now, while men and horses are fresh and we're not slowed down by foraging. I'll listen to anything you have to say but . . ."

"Jack," Secord interrupted, "I reckon nobody can argue with your arithmetic, but there's something else here. There's nothing personal in this, you understand, nothing at all, and I'm not complaining. But the fact remains that my regiment's the one in the middle and I'll be damned if I can move any faster than the one in front of me."

Gray's head came up with a snap, but Marlowe had anticipated that one and his right hand moved gently as he said, "Hold it, Dick. I'll grant you that's a fact, Secord, but it's only one of several and doesn't affect the over-all situation. There wasn't anything personal in what I said in the beginning either. You know—well, Christ knows, and more important, you know, how little I enjoy riding any of you and I shouldn't have to, but in the last analysis the responsibility is mine. I said I wasn't going to prolong this and I've said what I had to say. Save your energy for the road tomorrow—you'll need it. That's all."

When they had gone the colonel again lay down with his head on the saddle and tried to relax. He managed with his body but the mind was a different thing—it never stopped. Somehow he had a feeling, vague but still there, of frustration. You talked, you explained, you put the basic facts in their hands—or heads (which?) and ended up wondering what if anything you had accomplished.

He turned over on his side and for a long distance through the pines he could see the crooked lines of fires, now dying away rapidly. He wasn't worried about any kind of surprise attack here—they weren't far enough south yet and the distribution of Confederate force in this area (always barring the unexpected) was very well known.

Somewhere not far off a trooper breathed the notes of *Lorena* into a mouth harp. The sound was cut off sharply in midphrase, probably by an unsentimental sergeant interested in sleep, but Marlowe drifted off musing on the strangeness of a war in which fighting men happily adopted and cherished the most personal music of the other side. . . .

HAROLD SINCLAIR

The truth was that, for reasons trivial in themselves and therefore the more exasperating, they didn't make measurably better time.

Marlowe himself was up and down the full length of the column several times the following morning, and while he gave orders here and there he didn't seem to change the situation.

Near noon Marlowe rode out in front to have a look at the three-man point. He recognized the sergeant in charge and said, "It's Bullen, isn't that right, Sergeant?"

"Yes sir! Andy Bullen, sir."

Dressed variously in civilian clothing, they looked much like countrymen anywhere, which two of them were in fact. Marlowe looked them over carefully. Carbines were still in the saddle boots. They still carried their pistols but the belts were slacked, non-military fashion, and the sabers were gone. That they were armed was not in itself suspicious. Men did not always go armed in this country but when they did the fact was seldom remarked on.

Marlowe grinned and said, "Have any trouble getting the clothes?"

"Well—" Bullen paused and spat in the road dust. "No *trouble* exactly, Colonel. Fella there in Ripley had a general store, such as it was. Didn't amount to nothin' but he had what we needed. Cap'n Landry—uh, persuaded him."

"I see." Marlowe didn't pursue the point further. "Well, I wanted to tell you boys—I don't expect you to stay out here on this limb indefinitely. I'll see that somebody else gets a whack at it."

Bullen shrugged and again spat a brown stream. "S'all right with me, Colonel, speakin' personal. Just as soon be here as any place else. More elbow room out here."

"Well, we'll see. Don't run into any bear traps. If you see anything that looks like Rebel force don't start a war on your own. Just get the hell out of there with the information."

Dropping back, he fell in beside Major Gray, in the vanguard of the First Illinois.

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

Between Marlowe and the other senior officers of the First Brigade there was an informal relationship odd in the objective military sense but commonplace in this army, where a man's actual rank often bore little relationship to the size of his command. Marlowe was an acting brigadier and was actually in command of the First Brigade, and nobody questioned either his authority or his fitness to exercise it, yet on the official rolls he was a colonel, no more. Likewise no one questioned Dick Gray's command of the First Illinois Volunteer Cavalry although he was in fact a major.

Gray was still more than a little salty from the night before. "God damn it, Jack," he said, "if Secord thinks he can boot this outfit along any faster let him get the Second up here and try it! If I lope 'em a mile I have to walk 'em another mile in order to even it up. If I—"

"Don't get excited," Marlowe said calmly. "Of course Secord was right in that he can't move any faster than you do, but that's only part of it. If he was up here he wouldn't be doing any better than you are—if I didn't think so I'd damned sure have him up here. I'm not satisfied, no, but I'm not blaming anybody either, Dick. Just keep shoving 'em as much as you can."

So passed the second day and part of the third, but their pace did not accelerate. Marlowe fumed inwardly but there was no general fault which accounted for their slowness.

They passed through the county-seat towns of New Albany and Pontotoc, hardly more than unpainted villages, with their shabby, pitifully imitative little Greek Revival courthouses, the paint peeling and the wood of their disguised marble columns and cornices already starting to decay.

They had worked out a technique for getting through these places—naturally most roads led to and through them. Marlowe didn't expect real trouble in these towns but then there was no way to be sure in advance. So they would send forward a company of the Second Iowa and it would police the place. This

HAROLD SINCLAIR

usually amounted to nothing more than resting their horses until the balance of the column passed. Curiously, they would frequently be welcomed as friends—until the surprised inhabitants learned the truth. Possibly this wasn't so extraordinary in itself—there were always Confederate units that wore blue, or at least something more blue than gray. No considerable body of troops from either side, certainly none this size, had ever passed this way. Except for the railway line Marlowe was after there was nothing of military value hereabouts, and these people, still believing in what they thought was a powerful and all-protecting government, at first simply couldn't believe these troops weren't their own. They learned differently in a hurry, though in all truth not a single bona-fide noncombatant suffered personal injury at the hands of the brigade.

In the physical sense this country here hadn't suffered from the war, and it would never experience the hammering devastation that was even now being conjured up for Vicksburg. It was neither the richest nor the most populous part of Mississippi but it had a virile agriculture and so was important in the larger southern scheme of things. Along this road now traveled by the brigade spring planting was briskly under way—there seemed to be no lack of labor here and it wasn't all Negro by any means. There were able-bodied white men hereabouts in considerable quantity—the brigade could see them plainly as it passed by.

And that was one of the things which worried Marlowe. There was always the possibility that some local patriot, unwilling to wear a uniform but not averse to putting in his bit as long as little risk was involved, might carry word of the brigade's passing to the nearest Confederate force—in which case the fat might well be in the fire. Since they were off the railroad line there was no telegraph available, but Marlowe knew very well how fast and mysteriously news can travel. In two and a half days they hadn't seen a single Rebel in uniform, nor heard of any, but that didn't mean there might not be an infantry brigade dug in around the next bend or on the next riverbank. Marlowe did not believe this likely but neither did he dare operate much

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

farther solely on a basis of self-communion. So he halted the column, dispatched King to hold up Sergeant Bullen and his civilian-clad cohorts, then sent Lieutenant Davis to summon the captains of A, B, and C companies of the First.

Word went down the line that they would be here for a while and it was all right to relax. Within minutes horse gear had been pulled off, animals were staked out, and long ranks of men were fast asleep by the roadside.

Besides Davis there were present Captains Bryce and Harwood of A and B companies, and First Lieutenant Burns of C. They listened and watched attentively as Marlowe talked and drew a diagram in the dust with a long, sharp willow stick.

"I'm not worried," he said, "at least no more than normal. But the fact is that we're moving blind and that's not good if it can be helped. Now I'm not concerned—much—with what's ahead of us. I am concerned with any force that may be coming up behind us or moving in on our flanks. In those respects a big enough force could give us one hell of a surprise. Now there's no logical reason why there should be any Rebel force on our right, to the west, but still, there could be.

"So you, Burns, will backtrack here till you come to that road we crossed about a half-hour ago and head west. Then swing south and back east and pick us up again."

"Beg pardon, sir," Burns said a little nervously—as a relatively new company commander he wasn't accustomed to getting his orders directly from the acting brigadier. "I'm afraid I don't understand just how far I'm supposed to go."

Marlowe gestured mildly. "Not so fast, Burns, I'm coming to that—and this applies to you others as well. It's right at ten o'clock now and I'm going to hold the column here until two, but not one minute longer. You are all to guide yourselves by that interval. In other words, give yourselves roughly two hours out and two back. But we'll move at two whether *any* of you are back. It'll be up to you to catch us then."

"I understand, sir," Burns said with controlled eagerness. "Any special instructions?"

"This is to be just a general reconnaissance—I want to know

HAROLD SINCLAIR

what Rebel force is around, if any. Stay out of trouble and for God's sake don't pick any fights. I don't want any dead Rebels—I want information and I want you fellows back in the column. Clear enough now?"

"Yes sir."

"Then get moving, Burns—you needn't wait for the others."

"Now Bryce, and you, Harwood. As we sit here we're roughly fifteen miles west of the line of the M. & O. Now we know Ruggles has always had a certain amount of force along the railroad and he must still have. The point is, how much and where is it as of now? It may be—it was supposed to and I hope it worked—that when Dodge moved down from Corinth, east of the M. & O., he pulled Ruggles off base—which, of course, was the main idea. But maybe he didn't either.

"What I told Burns applies to you fellows—except that I think you're a little more likely to run into some Johnnies. Bryce, you will head east and north, toward the M. & O. Harwood the same except to the south. That should give us a good spread in relation to the railroad. Don't overlook anything—and don't tamper with the M. & O. even if you have a good chance. I repeat, we stay here until two, not a minute longer."

Marlowe watched them thoughtfully as they remounted—particularly Asa Bryce. He knew something about Bryce, not too much, but the man interested him more than a little. Bryce had been a professor of Greek and Roman history at Aberdeen College, and, if you accepted the popular concept, few pursuits were less warlike. Yet Marlowe regarded him as unquestionably the ablest company commander in the First. He was almost too much inclined to call on Bryce and A Company whenever an especially ticklish job turned up. And yet Bryce too on occasion had displayed some—well, rather surprising personal quirks. He was, for instance, the regiment's senior company commander, and when the majority was open it was offered to him as a matter of course. Marlowe had been pleased at the idea of removing him from company routine and bringing him closer to himself. And Bryce had refused the majority point-blank. More than surprised, Marlowe had said, "Any special

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

reason you'd care to go into, Captain?" Bryce had said, politely but firmly, "No sir, none that I'd care to go into—at least not here and now," and that was that.

What the reconnaissance parties learned, even in the negative sense, would in part determine when the Second Iowa would be detached and sent back to La Grange, or at any rate *started* for La Grange.

Marlowe kept telling himself it was still too soon to worry but all the same he was nervous. Actually, he had not expected any of the three recon companies back by two o'clock on the dot—you couldn't run these things on schedule and two had been only a target time. Burns had made it near three and Harwood around four. Neither had found anything except natives surprised into momentary paralysis at the strange sight of Federal cavalry. The problem now was the continued absence of Company A.

Marlowe was nursing a tin cup of bitter black coffee, well laced with whisky, when Bryce rode out of the darkness. Out of sight on the road the colonel could hear horses moving in a bunch, the rest of A Company. Bryce slid to the ground rather than dismounted, and Marlowe saw the captain's legs almost give way as they made contact with the earth.

Marlowe nearly sighed with relief. "Trouble, Asa?"

Bryce half-reclined on the grass and rubbed his legs, a rueful expression on his filthy, stubbled face. "Legs half-paralyzed—and so's my rump. Trouble? No, nothing really in that category. Just one damned thing and another and it all took time. Any coffee to spare, Colonel?"

"Sergeant!"

"Yes sir! Comin' right up. You like a stick o' somethin' in it, Cap'n?"

"No—yes, I believe I will. My brains, what there are of 'em, feel like a busted cotton bale. The others all back?"

Marlowe nodded. "Not on time—I didn't expect that—but back. They didn't see anything but landscape."

"Un-hunh." Bryce blew on the coffee, took a long swallow,

HAROLD SINCLAIR

and said, "Aaaah! That's what you'd call a drink with authority. We did run into a couple of things, Colonel, but nothing to change the course of the war." Bryce began a low chuckle that ended in a short laugh.

"What's so damned funny?" Marlowe said a little irritably.

"Sorry. I'll get to it in a minute. I couldn't help the laugh—funniest damn' thing I've seen in months. We found a pretty good road but until past noon didn't see anything but rundown shacks. I kept going—I wanted to get to the railroad, and came to this place called Tupelo or something like that. Anyway, it didn't amount to a damn as a town, and ran into this company of home guards—"

"Good Lord!"

"No, no trouble, Colonel. Bear with me. I sent in a couple of men to scout the place, and they reported these home guards were having a shindig. There was a place near the center of town—you know, a little grove, a well, and a watering trough. There were about forty in this bunch, not counting the Negroes doing the work. They were about to pitch into a barbecue the Negroes had been fixing—a nice hog and about a dozen chickens. My God! We could smell it a couple miles away."

Marlowe impatiently said, "Well?"

"They were armed, of course, but the guns were stacked about a hundred feet from the barbecue. They were so busy getting ready to work on the barbecue that nobody paid any attention to us. We came tearing in like a young cyclone, surrounded 'em like a bunch of cattle, they had no place to go, and that was that. One lad shot off his mouth—somebody always has to show how brave he is—and got the butt end of a quirt across the jaw a couple of times. That pretty well discouraged the argument. We stood the whole bunch against and around a nice big shade tree, took a couple of picket ropes and cinched them around good and tight, like a corn shock. Then we put four guards on them while the rest of us ate the barbecue—it was just ready. You know, Colonel, I couldn't have kept the boys away from that grub."

"I daresay," Marlowe commented dryly. "So what then?"

"Well, there were the guns—damndest batch of hardware you ever laid eyes on. The boys busted 'em on the ground and then competed in seeing how far they could throw and scatter the pieces. They had a nice time and the whole thing took only about an hour."

"All very well," Marlowe grunted, "but I don't know that it contributes much to our over-all information."

"Well, what the hell were we supposed to do," Bryce said imperturbably, "hand 'em back the guns and give 'em a free shot? Anyway, there's a little more to it. I don't know whether you know it, Colonel, but I've got two ex-telegraphers in A— Corporal Stanley and Hoblit. We went over to the M. & O. depot, kicked in the door, and the boys worked on the wire. They raised somebody up the line—Stanley says these operators chew the rag back and forth all the time. So anyway, Ruggles has about a thousand men up around Baldwin—"

"Damn!" Marlowe sat up like a suddenly jerked puppet. "Doing what? Christ, all last night and at sunup we weren't twenty miles from there!"

"Sure," Bryce drawled, "but we're not there now and he still is. He must think he knows something we know damned well ain't so. He's supposed to be digging in to hold off an attack on the M. & O. up there."

Marlowe frowned. "You're sure, Bryce?"

"No sir," Bryce said patiently, "I'm not *sure*. I'm telling you what Stanley said he got off the wire. But whether Ruggles is digging or not, we're a good forty miles ahead of him now."

"There's that," Marlowe conceded. "It's reasonable."

"Stanley couldn't ask the other fellow what *kind* of troops were up there, he didn't think it would sound natural. The other fellow did ask him if *he'd* heard of any Federals loose down here and of course Stanley said no."

"They'll be disabused of that notion as soon as the regular Tupelo operator got back on the job."

Bryce shrugged. His fatigue showed plainly in his homely

HAROLD SINCLAIR

features now. "Sorry, Colonel, but you can't have everything, though it's not my business to remind you of that."

"Oh, hell, Bryce, I'm sorry if I sounded critical—I didn't mean to be. You did a neat job, as usual."

Marlowe glanced around, saw that Sergeant King was apparently asleep and Lieutenant Davis nowhere in sight. "I still wish you'd taken the majority. It was your affair if you didn't want it but I still wish you had."

"Thanks," Bryce said, "but I don't." He got slowly, wearily to his feet. "Me, right now I'm at least through for the day—but you're not. You're never through. No, Gray's welcome as far as I'm concerned. Good night, Colonel."

Marlowe lay down again and for a while before closing his eyes watched a huge orange moon edge upward into the darkness. For the time being at least, he reflected, the hounds had not found the true scent, but he didn't doubt that they would. The question was, when?

Of course Bryce was right—*he* would be through when the war was over.

3

Blaney's Orders

In the faint glow from the fire Marlowe opened the face of the finely made hunter in his hand, made a mental note of the hour, and then carefully wound the watch. Not that the time mattered in the least—they were moving according to sunrise and sunset. This was a minor personal ritual which had nothing to do with time as measured in hours or days. The watch had been a first anniversary gift from his wife, the only physical thing of hers that he now retained about his person. His fingers moved lightly, caressingly, perhaps a little hungrily over the smooth yellow gold before he returned it to an inner pocket.

The lanky figure of Colonel Blaney materialized out of the gloom and Blaney said without preamble, "Well, Jack?"

"Oh, hello, Colonel. Find something to sit on." With his usual directness Marlowe dismissed the shades of the past from his mind and concentrated on the moment. "You look a little pooped, Colonel."

Blaney shrugged indifferently. "Well, why not? This is no dress parade. I'm not an old man yet, but neither does the juice lubricate like it did once. What's on your mind, Jack?"

"Of course you've known you and the Second would be pull-

HAROLD SINCLAIR

ing out. I'm the one who has to decide, and in my judgment tomorrow morning's the time." Marlowe unfolded his tattered map. "So far we've let the line of the M. & O. alone—it isn't what we mainly came after. But I've decided now that something ought to be done about it. In all logic, it's just too damned easy for Ruggles—or somebody—to move his forces up and down that line as he pleases. Captain Bryce of the First made contact with it about noon yesterday."

"I heard something about that. I'd like to have seen it."

"I believe now I should have had him tear hell out of the telegraph line as long as he was right there, but he had orders to let it alone, and if the omission causes trouble the fault is mine."

Blaney spat thoughtfully. "Tearing up the line would at least have give 'em a little bother. But we've been on the road four days now. It don't stand to reason they don't know somebody's down here anyway."

"Oh, we know now that they know—Bryce proved that for sure. I'd be amazed if somebody's not on our tail right now. It's going to be up to you to block off or slow up whatever's behind. That was figured originally."

"You know, Jack," Blaney chuckled sourly, "sometimes I'm not extra smart, I mean in some ways. I had to spout off my big mouth about being picked as the one to go back to La Grange. I still think I had a reasonable complaint—except that then it was for wrong reasons. We build a fire for eighty, ninety miles down here and then I'm supposed to turn around and put it out."

"You know I didn't write the orders." Even against his will there was an edge in Marlowe's voice.

"As long as you're going back, I've got a couple of small chores for you on the way. Here, take a look—"

At the moment they were bivouacked about midway between Houston and Starkville. In the morning the Second Iowa would take the first road to the left, in the direction of the M. & O. and West Point. Here there was a railroad bridge, ripe for burning. Having done that they would cross the rail line,

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

turn north and, the Lord willing, also take out the bridge at Okolona, the next town above.

"Is that all?" Blaney didn't try to conceal the sarcasm.

"It's a big order, maybe," Marlowe agreed, "but you can always try. Who knows? With luck you may walk through without a sign of trouble—"

"I'll do what the orders say, Jack—within the limits of what *can* be done, but just don't take too much for granted." Blaney got stiffly to his feet. "I'm not strong on this hunch business. Mostly I'm a practical man and take it as it comes. But this time I'm thinking luck's about run out for the Second."

"Nonsense!" Marlowe said, with a heartiness he couldn't feel. "You're overworking your imagination, Colonel."

"Am I?" Blaney smiled as though at some secret thought. "Well, I'll say so long and good luck, Jack."

"It ought to be the other way around."

"I reckon maybe we'd just better call it a Mexican standoff. I'll be seeing you—maybe."

Marlowe watched Blaney disappear in the darkness. Then he reached for a saddlebag and extracted a bottle—right now he felt he really needed a drink, perhaps deserved one. He had few illusions concerning what—probably—was in store for the Second Iowa. That was one of the prices command exacted. Still, there was such a thing as luck and it didn't necessarily have to be all bad.

Anyone thinking about it at all—and Marlowe for one thought about it because it was part of his business—knew it had to happen sooner or later. This was East Mississippi hill country and this was the time of year. By all the laws of nature it had to come, and the longer it was postponed the more violent it would be and the longer it was likely to last.

Rain—drenching, hammering, blinding, semi-tropical rain.

Near eight o'clock, when the rain had been falling for perhaps ten minutes, the last company—actually the rear guard—of the Second had turned off into the West Point road. Marlowe did

not see Colonel Blaney this morning—not directly, that is. There was no solid reason why he should. Everything it was necessary to say (officially) had been said last night. As Colonel Blaney himself turned into the side road he raised a hand in a farewell gesture, but it didn't seem directed to anyone in particular.

Marlowe swung his mount and moved to order Secord to shift his last company back five hundred yards, to assume the rear-guard position vacated by the Second.

Secord passed the word to an orderly and then jerked a thumb skyward. "We're going to catch it." It was already raining but not hard.

Marlowe shrugged. "It's one of the facts of life."

"If it amounts to much—and it looks like it was going to—it'll slow us down even more, Colonel."

"So—it will slow everybody else down accordingly. Rebel horses aren't any better in the mud than ours."

Twenty yards farther on Secord said casually, "Somehow I don't envy Blaney."

"Why?" Marlowe almost barked, and was surprised at his own unwarranted vehemence.

Secord's brows went up as he glanced briefly at Marlowe and away again. "Why, I don't know—Well, hell, Jack, if there's Rebs around, and there's bound to be, stands to reason they're likely to be thicker along the M. & O. That's all."

For answer Marlowe kicked his mount with spurred heels and moved toward the head of the column. Secord watched his retreating back and shrugged in his own turn. The privileges of rank—of course the Old Man had a right to be salty now and then if that's the way he felt.

Marlowe was only halfway to the head of the line, riding around the files of the First, when the rain seemed to reach its maximum rate of fall and stayed there. The sky opened and water fell with a force that stung bare hands on bridle reins. The road was dusty and of course uncared for—there were ruts left over from the last rain, whenever that was, and the combina-

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

tion of dust, pouring rain, and 4,000 churning hoofs turned the road into a fearsome quagmire within minutes. Only the men and animals in the very lead files of the First even slightly escaped the showers of mud flung by the shod hoofs.

They rode, shoulders hunched against the downpour, miserable and nearly silent in their misery. After the first fifteen minutes they could get no wetter but men and horses steadily became more heavily coated with mud. Men toughened by long months in the field found rumps and thighs galled and blistered by the constant friction between wet wool and wet saddle leather. They rode, becoming hungrier and thirstier—yes, thirstier in spite of this skyful of water. The streams were nauseating liquid mud and at the one lonely farmstead they encountered in two hours of riding the first three companies of the First completely emptied the shallow well.

Marlowe was morose, bitter, drawn into himself. Though it was becoming a more academic question with each hour that passed, Marlowe wondered how the Second Iowa was making out. Actually, once Blaney had disappeared down the West Point road he had passed from any effective brigade jurisdiction. But he hadn't passed from Marlowe's mind, and in his view Blaney was still a part of this operation.

THE PURSUIT

Nobody had ever imagined that Marlowe and the First Brigade could or would pass through Mississippi, even its wilder portions, invisible and unheard. As a matter of fact, his movement was known, or at any rate strongly rumored, within hours of his departure from La Grange. But there were two things which Confederate intelligence didn't know and, until it was a little late, wouldn't guess: Marlowe's real strength and where he intended ultimately to use it.

For better or worse, it was Captain Bryce's frolic of Sunday noon, particularly his diddling with the M. & O. telegraph, which gave the Rebels their first definite point of departure. The Tenth

Alabama Cavalry, Colonel C. R. Barteau, had arrived to hear the harrowing tale, considerably inflated, of the abused home guard, within hours of the departure of A Company. And while no one ever held it against him, it was right there that Barteau made his first wrong guess. He could only believe that Bryce was merely feeler, presaging a real attack on the M. & O. Accordingly, and using his best judgment, Colonel Barteau moved south and east to protect, so he thought, Okolona and Aberdeen. If he had merely followed A Company he would eventually have come up with a tired First Brigade. According to the percentages, Marlowe would very likely have made hash of the Tenth Alabama, but just as surely not without incurring casualties which very well could have unhinged the whole scheme.

But Barteau did not choose to follow A Company—not on that particular Sunday afternoon. On the other hand, he did not retire to Okolona to sit out the war. When whatever he expected didn't happen he put patrols to work and in due time learned definitely that the Federals had passed southward through Pontotoc, with apparent intention of attacking the M. & O. somewhere on farther south. By the time he received this information Barteau realized that Marlowe had already passed far south of his, Barteau's, position. So he set out in pursuit, picking it up at the point where the brigade had last been seen by an actual eye-witness.

But here Barteau made still another decision which was both good and bad. Knowing he was badly outnumbered, he augmented his command with what other troops were available. The trouble was, these troops consisted of indifferently mounted and trained state militia, a partial battalion of even worse infantry, and three antiquated guns that likely couldn't have hit Lookout Mountain at point-blank range.

On the night of April 20–21, Monday, Barteau, made increasingly eager by roadside reports, drove his backwoods outfit until nearly midnight, but there was a limit beyond which even Barteau couldn't drive them. When, nearly dead on their feet, they fell out by the roadside, they were only twelve miles

behind the rear guard of the bivouacked First Brigade. In the morning, though not early, Barteau booted them on their reluctant way again.

That the Lord sends the rain on the just and unjust alike is indubitably true, and it was to Colonel Barteau's great credit that he kept his ill-assorted show on the road at all. More than half his force now was infantry, and walking in mud is even worse than riding in it, besides which they still insisted on dragging along the useless guns.

In due course Barteau came to the road junction where the Second Iowa had taken leave of the rest of the brigade. There Barteau stopped to consider and thereby added another error to his string. No single mistake he made was disastrous in itself, not one was the result of too hasty judgment, and each was understandable. But no matter how good a field officer's judgment may be he must also have luck—and this was one of the weeks Barteau simply didn't have it.

In this mud the trail, or rather trails, of the First Brigade would have been plain to a blind man. The question was, which one? Because it seemed to be the logical thing Barteau couldn't rid himself of the belief that Marlowe was gunning for the M. & O. Railroad. He weighed the evidence, or thought he did, and accordingly veered off down the West Point road, in pursuit of what he firmly believed to be the largest portion of the brigade. It was, in fact, a very long time before he discovered his error, for as late as April 30, nine days later, when he had a little breathing spell, he wrote in an official report:

"The enemy divided here at this point, about 200 going on to Starkville and 700 continuing their march on the West Point road."

Again all credit to Barteau: he unhesitatingly chose what he believed to be the hard way, but good intentions alone are seldom enough and the decision cost him any real chance he'd ever had of catching the elusive First Brigade.

To complicate matters still further, in far-off Jackson, some 140 miles to the southwest, Lieutenant General Pemberton him-

self moved into this blind chess game. By telegraph he ordered all troops at Meridian, where the M. & O. crossed the Southern, to move north via the M. & O. and join forces with Ruggles. Pemberton too believed Marlowe's target was the M. & O. For a blind guess it could have been worse, except that it didn't catch Marlowe. As the 2,000 men moved north by train they were passed by the slower mounted First, a dozen miles to the west and still heading innocently southward.

The rain, heavy and unwelcome as it was, had been relatively local. It slowly diminished in volume and finally quit altogether about three of the afternoon. In the heavy humid atmosphere it would be some time before the brigade, with its stiff wool uniforms, would be thoroughly dry, but by evening the process was well under way.

They bivouacked a few miles below Starkville. Marlowe, as befitted rank, was a little better off than the rest. Sergeant King had located a cattle shelter—no more than a makeshift roof mounted on posts—but in the downpour the covered earth had remained drier than the surrounding ground. To give it a further air of luxury, the sergeant had provided some square footage of dry straw, “borrowed” from a nearby farmstead. In fact, the entire strawstack, together with a nearby haystack, had vanished under the onslaughts of the supply sergeants. So also had all the oats, corn, and loose horses on the place. So also had the entire contents of smokehouse, root cellar, and hen roost.

The proprietors, an elderly man and his wife, protested bitterly—at first, and then gave up. What was the use? Camped practically in their back yard were more men than they had ever seen in one place before. And these Yankees were obviously in no mood for argument. In fact, these Yankees were not like these unsophisticated people had expected an army to be. They were neither polite nor impolite. They simply went about their thievery, confiscation, requisitioning, whatever it might be called, as though these owners weren't there. After a while a Lieutenant Colonel Fairlie (Colonel Secord's second) appeared and courteously asked the man's name.

"What difference does it make to you—you thieves?"

"To me," Fairlie said indifferently, "it makes no difference whatever. I haven't the slightest interest. But I'm about to draw you an order on the Federal quartermaster general in Memphis. If your name is on it and you can identify yourself properly it will be paid promptly on presentation. If I have to draw it to bearer, then I can't vouch for what view Memphis may take. It's entirely up to you, sir."

"I insist—well, John Carstairs, sir, Oktibbeha County, Mississippi, Confederate States of America."

Fairlie wrote rapidly and then handed the order to Carstairs. "You might have a look at that, sir. I think you'll find it reasonable."

Carstairs took the order but didn't look at it. His hands shook with his wrath. "I protest this, sir! This is barefaced robbery—!"

"Not quite, I think." Fairlie smiled thinly—though not with the pure cynicism Carstairs imagined. "But that isn't my affair. If you have a complaint I suggest you take it up with what you call your government in Richmond."

"Sir, I—"

But Colonel Fairlie had already gone.

There was a good deal more to this "living off the country" than met the casual eye. The practical military point of view was, "Why should they complain? We could have, justifiably, *taken* what we needed. But no, we paid, and at a more than generous rate." All of which was indeed true—but only up to a point. In the case of this particular farmstead (and others like it) the supplies the First Brigade devoured in less than an hour would have, and were intended to, last these people more or less until the next harvest. It came down to the simple fact that, no matter how desirable they were in one sense, nobody could eat bills on a Union quartermaster general. Who on a desert island would exchange his food supply for pure gold?

There was another side to this from the requisitioners' point of view. "Living off the country" has a large, opulent sound; there is a picture of rollicking cavalrymen with hams and other fine provender dangling from their saddles. Well, it depends on

the country—and Oktibbeha County, Mississippi, was by no means York or Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Starkville, for instance. Two rather miserable general stores provided all the village's ordinary day-to-day needs. The supply sergeants ruthlessly stripped the shelves and got less than enough to furnish one hungry regiment one solid meal.

Marlowe himself had dined on part of a small ham and some hard bread, together with what King reminded him was the last of the coffee. He stood up, now and picked his way over the dark, sodden ground. By all rules of procedure he should have required Major Gray and Bryce to come to him. Instead, he was going to them, or more precisely to Bryce. This uncalled-for courtesy, this going out of his way—he had no exact words for it—wouldn't make the task of Bryce any easier. Yet somehow it made *him* feel better. He was acutely aware of what he was asking—requiring—of Bryce and A Company. It was at once more than he, Marlowe, had a right (moral at least) to require and no less than he must in the circumstances.

When presently he got Gray and Bryce together, and aside in a spot of comparative privacy, he came directly to the point:

"I don't like to rob you, Major, but I have to borrow A Company again."

Gray and Bryce waited, curious but not too surprised.

"How many men on the A Company roster as of now, Asa?"

"Thirty-four, Colonel," Bryce answered promptly. "Major Keller cut out two at La Grange. He was probably right—anyway, I didn't complain."

Thirty-four men in an active service company! It was ridiculous but it was also commonplace. When the ranks of these western regiments were reduced by normal losses there was no regular method of replacing them. There were occasional enlistments in a regiment especially preferred for some personal reason, but that had little effect on the over-all situation.

"I wish you had more strength," Marlowe said, "but it can't be helped. The point is, gentlemen, we've got to keep the minds of our friends focused on the M. & O. as long as possible. They'll

soon know we're actually after the Southern, but I hope not until after we've gotten there. In the meantime, as long as we keep pecking at the M. & O. they can't be dead sure and they'll have to split themselves to a certain extent. We can't spare more than A Company for that now. That's about it."

Frowning slightly, Bryce said, "Just what do you expect me to do, Colonel?"

"Anything and everything you can to the M. & O., as far down as possible, and at the same time keep yourself in the clear."

They digested that for a moment and then Gray said, "That, if you don't mind my saying so, Jack, is one hell of a large order for one way under-strength company."

"I said at the beginning I didn't like it too well myself, Major. On the other hand, I don't know that two or even three companies would really be so much better. Regardless of that, we can't spare 'em anyway. What would you say, Bryce?"

The captain shrugged and at the same time looked sardonically at Marlowe. "Say about what, Colonel? If it's an order, then what difference does it make what I think about it?" Bryce's tone was withdrawn, remote. "You know, we all know, how much chance we have once we are really separated from the column here. Sure, with luck we can probably dodge for a while. But in the long run—why fool ourselves? How long am I supposed to take on this picnic, Colonel?"

"Well." Marlowe didn't know the exact answer to that but he had to say something. He tried to pick his words carefully. "I see it purely as a matter of discretion and judgment, Captain. If you're blocked off and can't reach the railroad at all, why, then pull out and rejoin as soon as you can. If you strike the road once but can't chance it again, then come on back—hell, we may be stopped dead ourselves in the next twenty, thirty miles."

Bryce smiled thinly. "Colonel, you know in all fairness, you know damned well, I can't operate on the basis of what *may* happen to the rest of you. Like I said, why fool ourselves? Right now my animals are as beat as the rest, yet if I do anything at

all I'll have to cover at least two miles to your one. We can skip the details, but honestly, do you expect me to ever get back?"

"I have to proceed on that assumption," Marlowe said stiffly.

"All right, let's boil it down so we understand each other, Colonel. I strike the M. & O. as many times as I can—if I can. I rejoin the brigade when and if I can."

"You put it better than I did, I think. I intended to give you a chance to refuse this on personal grounds, Asa." Marlowe had to say it though it deliberately put his own judgment in doubt. And the instant he said it he knew he'd made another mistake.

"No, by God!" Bryce flared, and there was obvious anger in his voice for the first time in the discussion. "I submit that you put this as an order, Colonel. You can countermand the order if you like but you have no right to put it up to me. I've never refused an order yet and I won't start here. Major Gray will bear me out."

"Very well then," Marlowe said coldly. "Let the order stand. I suggest that you fall in at the rear of the column in the morning and take the first road to our left."

"Yes sir. Will that be all, Colonel?"

"Unless you think of something else I'd say that from here on it's up to you, Captain." Prolonging this could only make things—well, more complicated. "I—well, luck."

"Thanks. If you'll excuse me then." Bryce swung on his heel and walked away into the darkness.

Gray kicked at the soggy earth with a boot toe, waiting for Marlowe to say something.

"Well," Marlowe said heavily, "I expect almost anybody could have handled that better than I did, Dick. You always think of the right way afterward."

"Who doesn't, Jack? But—well, Bryce had his side of it. You couldn't—I wouldn't exactly feel like thanking anybody for a package like that myself."

"It has to be done, somebody has to do it. Well, I'll see you."

Marlowe took a step or two, then swung back abruptly. "Oh, Dick—"

"Yes?"

"Somehow this slipped my mind. As long as Secord's in the rear he'll have to take care of it—I'll explain to him in the morning, but you need to know about it. Starting tomorrow morning we burn or otherwise tear out every bridge, no matter how small."

"Yes, sure. One thing—"

"Such as what?"

"Bryce'll be behind us too."

"Certainly—and he'll do like anybody else behind us, manage the best way he can."

The fires had died down and Marlowe picked his way carefully through rows of sleeping men. The sky had cleared with the sunset and the night was alive with the remote and impersonal stars. In a clear spot he stopped and for a moment looked up into the eternal immensity of space. An owl hooted softly, was answered by another; and the night scurriers made small sounds in the grass; a horse sneezed and stomped; an invisible sleeper threshed restlessly in weariness, mumbled "A little longer." A little longer until what? Where? He shivered involuntarily.

Small War

Bryce had gone to sleep—in a mood near to bitterness. He would have been stupid indeed if he hadn't seen in an instant what Marlowe was letting him in for. Of course the Old Man wouldn't say so—how could he?—but his feeling had been plain enough. If a stick had a dirty end A Company got it—and the unfairness was manifest.

But when reveille pulled him reluctantly from the well of sleep the feeling had gone, or rather changed. Fair was a word children used in their games; it had a very small place in the army. He did not question the necessity of the move, not in the circumstances. And if there was any fault it lay in the circumstances, not in the reasoning of Marlowe.

Actually, in other conditions, he would have enjoyed this freedom of command. Not because he derived any great pleasure from issuing orders, but because it freed him from the natural restraint of regimental and brigade operations.

This morning he had done something which even Dick Gray would probably have raised hell about—except that he was and would remain unaware of it. In spite of the fact that they had

slept all night as usual, he had deliberately taken them a quarter mile off the road into the timber and given men and horses three hours of extra rest. Nobody thanked him—he hadn't expected anyone to, but all the same he knew it was appreciated.

Unlike the straight section-line roads of Central Illinois, the "highways" in this benighted country wound like aimless snake tracks. Their very nature provided excellent cover except that it could work against as well as for you.

They started up a longish slope, not really steep except in the sense that from here they couldn't see what lay beyond the summit. One of the two men on point in front came back into view, raised and pushed a hand palm outward and forward in the signal to halt. Bryce rode forward and joined him.

"Something wrong, Charley?"

"Nothin' to get excited about right now, Cap'n, but you better have a look at the other side o' the ridge."

At the top they found the other man already dismounted and Bryce left him to hold the horses.

Ahead of them the timber thinned considerably and the ground fell away in a long, easy slope to the railroad line and a village Bryce assumed was Macon. But that wasn't all, or even the most important thing. Strung out for a quarter mile along the railroad were men, a great many men. At this distance—Bryce had no glasses—he couldn't see much detail but these couldn't be anything but troops. There was also a conglomerate train still standing by, a mixture of coaches, boxcars, and flats, whether just arrived or just going there was no way for Bryce to tell.

Charley Dirks whistled softly and said, "Bro-ther!"

"Un-hunh," Bryce agreed. "I'd figured we might load up the grub sacks down there but this looks like the end of the line."

"Say, wait a second!" Dirks laid a quick hand on the captain's arm. "There, near the second bend."

They stayed long enough for Bryce to get a good look. There were three mounted men—obviously a routine patrol sent out

HAROLD SINCLAIR

from the town. Bryce guessed them not to be cavalrymen but infantrymen given horses for this chore. They carried neither sabers nor saddlebags.

Bryce jerked his head and in another moment they rode hurriedly back down the slope. They could, he reflected, simply take to their heels and the patrol, unless one of them was adept at reading road signs, might not even guess A Company had been within ten miles of here. But that was contrary to his instinct and training—and one of a cavalryman's primary jobs was to garner information. These three probably wouldn't have much, but then you never knew. More than that, A Company could use those three horses.

He simply dismounted the company, left every other man to hold two horses, in the cover away from the road, and put the others in concealment.

The three riders, all unsuspecting, moved casually down the hill. Then the one with the rifle on his leg suddenly exclaimed, "Hey, y'all! Hold on a minute. Somethin' funny—" He slid to the ground and stood looking at the place in the still-soft road where A Company had stopped, milled around, and then moved into the timber. "Say—!"

Then a horse nickered in the timber—it really didn't matter now, and Bryce said, "Damn it—get 'em, boys!"

That was about all there was to it—almost. The arms of the men went up. Troopers retrieved the muskets—none of the three had any other weapons—and shoved them into line in the road.

"Some of you get those junk saddles off the horses," Bryce ordered, "and throw 'em in the brush somewhere. These pecker-woods won't need 'em. Leave the bridles to lead with."

The three stood there, arms still up, looking sullen, angry, discomfited, uneasy. Bryce looked them over without emotion. Then, "I need a little information, boys," he said pleasantly enough. "You'll make it easier on yourselves if I get it in a hurry and without any argument."

One of them, apparently the oldest of the three, muttered

"Don't tell the gawdam bluebellies nothin'. Y'all ain't called on to. It ain't regulation."

"That's right," Bryce agreed, still pleasant. "But now and then we have to ignore the finer points. Is this town up ahead here Macon?"

Sullenly, "Why'n't y'll go on an' see?"

"Un-hunh. What troops are those there now?"

No answer at all now.

"Well, well," Bryce said conversationally, "have it your own way, but at least one of you could have saved yourself a little bother." He looked them over more carefully now, making a swift choice. "Kelso"—this time the captain's voice crackled—"Take your saber and apply it to the rump of that jackass in the middle so it'll do the most good!"

"Yes *sir!*"

The saber came out with a rusty, metallic rasping sound that almost put a man's teeth on edge and the middle man's sleepy eyes were suddenly wide.

"Now looky heah, Majuh, y'all cain't—"

"Don't tell the sombitches nothin', Dink—they pure bluffin'."

Bryce's mouth tightened. "I warned you men we didn't have time to fool around. Now, you, what troops are there in Macon? Encourage the man a little, Kelso."

Kelso nodded—and supplied encouragement.

The man winced visibly and sweat oozed suddenly on his forehead—but he was still silent.

"Ah, a real pure-quill patriot," Bryce observed. "Too bad all that will power has to go to waste. Nate," he said to the sergeant. "Kelso needs a little help. Give this brave lad a little pleasure on the belly button."

Sergeant Brown grinned in anticipation. "A pleasure, Cap'n!"

The saber point flicked out, came to rest on the butternut tunic, and pressed inward, making a measurable indented cone in the thick cloth.

"What troops are those in Macon, soldier?"

"Answer the Cap'n, you sonofabitch!" the sergeant snapped

HAROLD SINCLAIR

suddenly, unexpectedly. "I don't have to be a gentleman like he does." The tunic cloth parted under the pressure and suddenly the saber point disappeared.

"Part of—of the Thirty-third Alabama. Part of the Seventh Kentucky and Twelve Loosiana, Majuh. Gen'l Loring's in command."

"Well, now, that's better. They just get here?"

"'Bout two hours ago."

"Un-hunh. Are they staying? How long?"

"I—I guess so. I don't know sure 'nough. They got to stay anyhow till we git back. An' I heard said they were diggin' emplacements for two six-pounders that come up with the Seventh from Meridian."

"Now that's what I call intelligent cooperation, friend."

There was more but it wasn't important, and Bryce finally said, "Well, when you get back—and that's going to take you a little time—give Loring General Marlowe's compliments and tell him we'll get to him directly. Now, you three, start peeling off your duds!"

They stared at the captain in new astonishment but still stood silent, unmoving, possibly unbelieving.

"You heard me!" Bryce barked. "I said get 'em off—and fast."

"But Cap'n, seh—" one of them began.

"Off—or I have them taken off you. You see, gentlemen, we can't take you with us and we don't want you to go anywhere else in too big a hurry. Corporal, give 'em a hand, a lot of hands, if you think they need it. Let 'em keep whatever junk they have in their pockets," Bryce said carelessly.

Ridicule is a bloodless but potent weapon and A Company didn't spare the whips. When they were down to nothing but soiled shirts there were ribald and shattering comments on spindly, hairy shanks and posteriors.

"Look there, I swear that ain't a man—looks like a bear."

"Bear—hell! That's pure skunk fur or I ain't never seen any!"

Shamed, ridiculed, and reduced to impotent speechless rage, they stood there dumbly, almost like sheep huddled for protection. "Please, Cap'n, if y'all'd jes' let us—"

"Get moving and don't even look back!" Bryce cracked. "And tell your General Loring he'd better dig deep if he doesn't want General Marlowe's division to run plumb over him. Now move!"

With the company mounted again they sat their horses and watched the three dejected figures move slowly back up the rutted road. On pale, tender, dirty feet they minced, frog-hopping at each sharp stone. Company A watched silently for a moment, then added the final parting insult—a collective guffaw that echoed among the trees.

You could say this of Cap'n Bryce—he thought of the damndest things sometimes.

Bryce led them back toward the west but only as far as the first road, where he turned south again. This road was still only four or five miles from the railroad but that didn't worry him at the moment. With only infantry at Macon there was no chance of effective pursuit from there. In fact, he saw the presence of the troops at Macon as reassuring; as long as they were there they couldn't be anywhere else.

Midnight found them on the M. & O. right of way, about ten miles south of Macon, Bryce judged, although they had ridden a long thirty-mile loop to get here. Bryce wanted a bridge, the bigger the better, and they followed the line until they found one. The near-full moon was well into its downward arc but it would provide light of a sort for another hour. Most of them were old hands at this business and many of them carried short-handled axes, short enough to go in the saddlebags. Rails were torn out wherever they could find one loose enough to handle—these roads had had almost no maintenance since the start of the war. Telegraph poles were chopped off at the ground and dragged into piles on the tracks for burning. The bridge timbers were too tough for their small tools but they had an answer to that: they scattered brush, dead limbs, and some of the tinder-

dry telegraph poles the full length of the structure and set fire to it in the middle and at both ends. By the time they were ready to go the whole flaming mass had crashed into the stream-bed.

General Loring's troops had ridden from Meridian to Macon, but if they came back this way they were sure going to walk, at least for a few days.

Two o'clock and moonset found them asleep in an oak thicket five miles away. Bryce didn't bother to set a guard.

Near ten o'clock on this morning of the twenty-third, south of Louisville, the brigade pounded across the Pearl River bridge. Colonel Marlowe lingered behind to watch the rear guard burn the long wooden structure. The Pearl was by far the largest stream they had crossed up to now, and while they had been burning bridges now for two days most of them hadn't amounted to much and their destruction would not hold up determined pursuit for long. But Marlowe accounted the destruction useful if each one delayed pursuit for no more than an hour. The destruction of the Pearl bridge, however, would leave a real hole behind them.

They moved on southward and passed through the county seat of Philadelphia at three in the afternoon.

Marlowe would not have said he was either worried or apprehensive. Dissatisfied was perhaps the better word—though he wondered if that wasn't the normal condition of a conscientious field commander. He had never, even in his own mind, set an exact time when he intended to reach the Southern. Five days had been possible theoretically, six, no seven, was far more likely. And yet this was already the tail end of the seventh day and they still had a long way to go.

South of Philadelphia he rode with a leg thrown loosely over the saddle pommel, the worn map spread out for the hundredth time. They had passed Philadelphia but as usual in the latish afternoon they were slowing down. In normal procedure they would not cover a great deal more ground by supertime.

When he put the map away in an inside pocket his mind was

made up. He sent Sergeant King to fetch Dick Gray and Secord, and when they were all together he put it to them bluntly.

"Bedding down for the night as usual, we'll be due to hit the Southern about dark tomorrow night. And that just won't do. For one thing, the Southern, through Meridian and Jackson, is *the* supply route into Vicksburg, and I'll make a small bet there are at least a few troops at Newton—maybe just going or coming. If there aren't, Meridian is only thirty miles straight east and there are bound to be troops there. How long, once the word is out, will it take them to get to Newton from Meridian? An hour? Two? Anyway, not long. All right. So we have the brigade largely dismounted, scattered to hell and gone up and down, working on the railroad. It'll be night, remember, and we don't know the ground. If force moved in on us in that condition, we wouldn't have a prayer."

"Well, in that case," Gray said, "I suppose we'll just have to lay over. That would rest horses and men and God knows they need it. That way they'd be fresher—"

"No!" Marlowe snapped impatiently. "You still miss the point, Dick. It'd still put us there at the wrong time of day. No, we're going on through, now, *tonight!* We'll give 'em an hour at suppertime, that's all. Barring something like an act of God, by noon tomorrow this job ought to be half done."

"Half?" Gray said curiously. "What's the other half?"

"Getting ourselves out of this hole once we've reached the bottom of it," Marlowe said calmly.

. . . It was, in a way, requiring a good deal of the men. Marlowe knew that very well indeed. Never in their two years of service had they covered this much distance in a single move. Seven full days in the saddle, from daylight to dusk, foraging on the side, caring for the animals, going partly hungry, keeping formation of a sort, making and breaking their skeleton camps, and always with the chance, even the probability, that hell might break loose at the next bridge or bend in the road—it hardly added up to a pleasant excursion.

There was another side to it. The men would cuss blue mur-

der at the prospect of an all-night ride, but it would be done. They would, Marlowe knew, be literally half-dead on their feet by midmorning tomorrow. But the extra needed driving power would also be there, provided by the very fact of finally doing what they set out to do, the knowledge that once done, done *now*, it would not have to be done again.

They drove on through the town of Decatur, around two-thirty, in the darkness after moonset and before the first sign of dawn. No one in the sleeping town actually *saw* them, though a few light sleepers rose and came to front windows in somewhat nervous curiosity, roused by the steady tramp of hoofs. They saw little more than a dark blur of almost silent horsemen, indistinguishable as friend or foe and identified as cavalry only by the sound of hoofs and their numbers. The brigade now numbered less than a thousand men, and most of them passed through Decatur at a tired walk. But naturally the legend immediately took root that thousands of wild-riding horsemen had swept through the streets at breakneck speed. A few more imaginative souls hinted that they had seized weapons with the notion of opposing the invaders, and had only refrained because of the vast numbers.

Pursuant to his specific orders, when Sergeant Bullen and his men on point approached what they judged to be the outskirts of Newton, they retired at once to the head of the column. Also pursuant to previous orders, Captain Landry of D Company was waiting, or rather riding, with Marlowe. The colonel didn't distrust Sergeant Bullen. It was just that he wanted someone with a somewhat different, if not keener, mind than Bullen's to report the exact situation in Newton. Landry was elected. He took the sergeant back with him, to mind his horses, near the point where Bullen had stopped and turned back, while the captain went on in afoot.

In the meantime the column waited, men asleep or drowsing on animals which likewise seemed to be drowsing. Marlowe, Seccord, Gray, and Lieutenant Colonel Fairlie were in a small group

afoot, but Marlowe would not allow the men to relax on the ground now. He too much feared the weakness of the flesh.

"Nothing to do but wait it out," Marlowe said shortly. They were withdrawn a little from the main body of the column and the colonel fumbled in a saddlebag and came up with a bottle of whisky. He took a draught, handed the bottle to Secord in the semidarkness, and said, "Pass it around and finish it, gentlemen. You may need it by daylight."

Heedless of any example he might set, he dropped on the roadside grass and let his forehead fall forward on his drawn-up knees. Sometimes the briefest sleep was a help—

"Colonel!"

Someone was shaking his shoulder and he emerged from a dream with a mild start. The sky was perceptibly lighter now. Somewhere to the east, to their left, there was the rumble of train wheels.

"Colonel!" It was Secord's voice, urgent. "God damn it, Colonel! Landry's back."

"All right, Frank," Marlowe said calmly. "Let's have it."

Landry was brief and to the point. There were troops, yes, how many precisely it was impossible to tell. There were four or five sentries along the tracks. There were a depot, a freight house of considerable size, a long cotton warehouse. Probably, Landry thought, the troops were quartered in one or both of the latter two buildings. There was also a train, a dozen or so freight cars, standing but with steam up.

"Ah," said Marlowe, the sound of the other train even louder in his ears now. "On a passing track?"

"No, Colonel, on the main line, west of the cotton plant and also headed west. My guess is they've got a little trouble—maybe a hotbox."

"Hmm. I wonder what about this one from the east?"

"Hell, I hear it," Landry said. "It'll have to stop. No way to get by the other one without a lot of horsing around. There is a passing track, but the one in there now has run way past it."

"Ah," Marlowe said, "just like Christmas in April, Captain." Two freights westbound for Vicksburg, at any rate to Jackson, which amounted to the same thing. Well, everybody got lucky once in a while.

He gave it to them tersely, the ideas he had been waiting to let fall into place. Secord would take the Second and pass around to the other side of the town, taking a westward route to avoid the train coming in from the east. Secord would have exactly a half-hour. He would dismount three companies and send them in afoot, the others to remain mounted in reserve. If there were many men in the buildings, and they didn't panic, from that concealment they could play merry hell with horsemen. The First would send in three dismounted companies from this side. From there on events would shape themselves.

"One other thing, Frank," Marlowe said as Secord climbed back into the saddle. "Detail a company to nail the crew of that westbound train, especially the enginemen. They may have some trouble, as Landry says, but it also may not be serious enough to keep them from pulling out in an emergency. Gray will take care of the other train. That's all, Frank." Almost as an afterthought he snapped open his watch face and said, "It's exactly five-fifteen. Luck."

The light was growing with each moment. In the road, horses stamped and sneezed and here and there leather creaked loudly. The dawn stillness was so heavy that every smallest sound seemed magnified tenfold. There would be no bugles this morning. The word went down the line file by file.

Marlowe looked at his watch one last time, snapped it shut, and said almost casually, "All right, Dick. Better get 'em moving—"

When they were under way again he had one sharp moment of near panic—no one knew what was in or on that train in from the east. Troops? It could be. But the time to worry was past. Secord was committed and thus so were they all.

The town of Newton, what there was of it, was hillier than Marlowe had expected; in fact, all of east central Mississippi

was hillier than he had expected. His tattered, two-dimensional Colson map told him nothing of the local topography.

Fifty yards this side of the rail tracks—from here he could see both the passenger station and the freight house—the colonel suddenly stopped and dismounted. Sergeant King had the bridle reins before Marlowe even needed to nod at him. He glanced upward at a faded sign on a faded store front, which read: P. GASH, GEN. MERCH. He smiled faintly and said, "Take him around to the side of the building, Sergeant, out of the line of fire. You will please inform Major Gray and Colonel Secord that until further notice this will be brigade headquarters—the establishment of P. Gash, to be exact."

"Right, sir."

Marlowe, standing, put a muddy-booted foot on the hitch rail and thrust an unlighted cigar between his teeth. This, against the odds, was the place they had started for. And now they were here. That was half the story. After a while the other half—would it be as long?—would begin. Well you played each hand as the cards came to you.

. . . The firing began then, and a ball slapped into the faded weatherboarding behind Marlowe, but he didn't turn his head—you never heard the one that made the big difference.

The town was fairly open, particularly around the railroad property. It provided the small garrison with a convenient field of fire. The dismounted men used every bit of available cover, and as the colonel watched, almost dispassionately, the windows of the freight house seemed literally to melt away—in the solid crash of small-arms fire the falling glass made no audible sound. The men in the freight house didn't have a prayer but as usual these people were selling high. Rifle fire poured steadily from the shattered window openings.

The ten or a dozen blue-coated troopers made a dash at an angle across the open space—there were no windows in the ends of the freight house. Once sheltered there they could set fire to the building. Seven of the troopers made it, though one sprawled face downward on the ground after he reached shelter.

HAROLD SINCLAIR

The others lay scattered in the open ground and across the tracks. Unaware that he did so, the colonel sighed—you always paid something for everything.

Major Gray cantered up and dismounted on the run.

The colonel's thought shifted instantly and he demanded, "What about those train crews?"

"All under control. One fellow was a little overambitious and got himself shot—naturally. What do you think, Jack? I've still got four loose companies. The men here on the ground can handle that bunch in the freight house before long. Why not put the others to work on the railroad, get it started?"

"Yes, I think so. That other train—what was it?"

"Ten ramshackle freight cars of miscellaneous stuff."

"Might as well have at it then," Marlowe said almost casually. "But before they burn the cars have the freight checked. There ought to be some stuff we can use in at least one of the two trains." He frowned thoughtfully, looking out across the miniature battleground again. "Have you seen Keller anywhere?"

"Why, no, not specifically, but of course he doesn't belong up here. Seems to me he said he'd picked a nice yard back there a street or two—a place where he could handle the wounded and it'd still be easy to get to. I'll see if you want me—"

"Never mind," Marlowe said impatiently. "Get on with your business, Dick. I'll check on it pretty soon."

Specifically, the location and operation of the aid station were not the personal responsibility of the brigadier. They were first the business of the surgeon and, after that, the regimental commander. All the same the First had been his own and its over-all welfare was almost a fetish with him. He knew he wouldn't rest until he had satisfied himself. There was obviously no crisis imminent here; the situation was in hand. The fire from the freight house had slackened considerably now and they were able to pick up a wounded man here and there. Some of them were being carried past Marlowe. He didn't bother to count them now—the figures would be bad enough when he got the totals later.

He said, "Davis—hold the fort. I'll be back in ten minutes or so at the most."

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

Leading his horse, he walked back down to the rutted cross street, away from the noise and the pungent, drifting powder smoke. It was full daylight now, and there was a big grassy yard, with well-spaced trees. The wounded were being, had been, laid out in a convenient row alongside a bank of riotously flowering white and purple lilacs. As usual Marlowe half set his teeth—you saw thousands of these bleeding men but somehow the sight never quite became commonplace. Keller was nowhere to be seen but Marlowe recognized the spotted horse the taciturn surgeon usually rode staked out on the spring grass. Corporal Dan Meigs, Keller's medical orderly and all-round assistant, was kneeling beside a man who gasped violently for breath. Meigs was supporting the man's shoulders and holding a canteen a few inches from his mouth, waiting patiently for the gasping to cease.

Marlowe waited a moment and then touched the corporal on the shoulder as he said, "Where the devil is Major Keller, Corporal?"

Meigs got to his feet, still holding the canteen. He seemed uncertain, a little flustered, as though somehow torn between two conflicting apprehensions. "Well, Colonel, Sir," he said, "I kind of think it's like this—"

"You kind of think!" Marlowe felt his boiling point begin to rise. "What the hell kind of talk is that, man? More important—where's Keller? Well, speak up!"

It was a story as simple and elemental as it was astonishing, as much as Meigs really knew of it. This small boy, from the brick house at the rear of this property, had come running down to the street, naturally curious about all the apparent excitement. By a wild mischance the boy's throat had been nicked by a stray ball. The scratch could hardly be called a wound but it had bled profusely, where the boy could see it, and he had become almost hysterical. Keller had dressed the scratch, quieted the lad, and led him back to the house. Then in a few minutes he had hurried back, picked up part of his kit, and returned to the house.

"What'd he say?" Marlowe demanded.

"Nothin', Colonel—well, I mean he was in a hurry an' just said he'd be back in a little bit—"

"Did you have any of our men here then?"

"No sir, nary a one, Colonel. Not until maybe fifteen, twenty minutes later. I waited a bit—he *said* he'd be back—and doin' what I could here, sir. Then I went up to the house." Meigs chewed his lower lip in thought. Marlowe here was the Old Man, the Ultimate Authority, yet Keller was his immediate superior, partial intimate, and sometime protector, and there was a certain loyalty—"Well, I went up there and there was a nigger woman came to the door when I knocked an' she wouldn't let me in to see the major an' said she couldn't call him. I couldn't very well bust in the house, Colonel, sir—that's against every regulation. This nigger woman just walled her eyes through the crack in the door an' said she'd tell the major, sir. That was all I could do. But I knowed what was goin' on. Some woman givin' birth—I know, sir, I heard that kind of yellin' an' carryin' on too many times before." The corporal turned docile and utterly honest eyes on the colonel.

Marlowe said harshly, "You haven't been back?"

Meigs shrugged eloquently. "Why, Christ alive, Colonel, I been plenty busy since! Just take a look. They started comin' in—an' I sure as hell can't make Major Keller do anything he don't intend to do—sir!"

Was there an implication in that *I*? No matter—the colonel didn't especially need it. Behind them on the new grass a man whimpered like a hurt, uncomprehending animal.

As Marlowe strode—almost ran—toward the house he was half-blind with fury. It was a foolish state, of course, but at the moment he couldn't help himself. He slammed down the ornamental iron knocker with a force that literally shook the door in its frame. The Negro woman, presumably the same one Meigs had been talking about, opened the door a crack. "Mistuh," she said stolidly, "we jes' cain't—"

Her adamance, hostility, sense of loyalty, whatever it was, only infuriated him the more. "Get out of my way!" he said with cold ferocity, and flung back the door. Inside, he hesitated a moment to get his bearings—but the screaming came from be-

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

hind the closed door immediately to his left—probably the front parlor. Without a second's hesitation he flung back the door and stepped into the room.

There was the tangled bed and the white, desperately writhing blur that was the woman. Surgeon Major Keller was leaning over her. Marlowe held himself, within his admitted limitations, to be a man of good will and he understood perfectly Keller's being here. But his problem was Keller's *plus* a great many other complications—and he was still angry.

Keller paid no attention when Marlowe entered. Marlowe barked, "Keller!" He did not recoil at what he saw but neither did he have any desire to approach closer to the bed.

The surgeon straightened up, turned, and faced the colonel. He looked at and apparently through Marlowe and said abstractedly, "Well, what is it, Colonel?"

"What in God's name do you think you're doing, Keller?"

"Doing? It's obvious, I think. This woman will die if she doesn't get proper attention—maybe even then. You see, the cord—"

"*She'll die!*" Marlowe felt as though about to explode. "What the hell do you think is happening to those men out there in the yard?"

"One man can't do everything. Her need was first."

"It's no business of yours, Keller! Right now it's not your business if ten thousand Rebel brats are born or die!"

"I don't think you mean that, Colonel," Keller said calmly. "It's beside the point in any case. This is simply a matter of a human life. Perhaps two."

"And those ten, fifteen men out there are not?" Fury was building up inside Marlowe all over again.

"Wells will manage to handle it."

"Wells! He's probably got his own hands full, clear over on the other side of town. God damn it, Keller! *You're* the surgeon of the First! And moreover you're an officer under oath, in case you'd forgotten."

Keller shrugged. "Possibly a question of which oath, Colo-

HAROLD SINCLAIR

nel, a matter of difference in words. In any case, I don't need a brigadier to point out my duty for me—"

The woman's animal scream rose in a slow crescendo and then ended in a sudden terrible gasping sound that left Marlowe shaken in spite of himself.

Still—with one sure motion he drew the heavy Navy Colt and pulled back the hammer. "This is the end of the talk, Major Keller," he said coldly. "As of this moment you are under arrest. Pick up your gear and let's go!"

For an instant Keller's aplomb was jarred violently, but he recovered quickly enough, and went back to work, talking as he bent over the woman. "Why waste the histrionics, Colonel? I don't believe you'll use the pistol—not here and for this. What could you possibly gain, even from the point of view of what you call your duty?"

Well, what, to be sure? The scream was repeated again and its impression on the colonel was reflected in the faint trembling of the pistol barrel. But it still did not affect the iron in his will.

"No," he admitted, "I wouldn't gain much—but you're still under arrest. You have this much choice—bring your gear now and get to work. Otherwise, I send enough troopers up here to carry you."

For a long moment their wills clashed. Then Keller turned, shrugged, picked up his hat, tunic, and saddlebags, and moved toward the door. Marlowe made way for him and he did not look at the vast pain on the bed again.

In the hall the Negro woman glared at Marlowe with distilled hate. "Piss po' Yankee scum!" she muttered.

"Shut your filthy mouth!" Marlowe said with almost brutal indifference. "You'd do better taking care of your mistress, or better yet, finding another doctor for her."

The row of wounded had grown a little longer on their return. The men, those who were able to, stared at them in ill-concealed astonishment, then dropped their eyes under the colonel's hard stare. Meigs kept himself busy and avoided looking at Keller at all.

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

Two more troopers came up, between them supporting a sergeant with a leg wound. Marlowe waited until they had deposited their load then said, "You two men on some special duty?"

"Uh, no sir, not exactly," one of them answered. "We're just due to report back to Captain Brant, K Company."

"Very well. You've got a special detail now." Marlowe deliberately raised his voice so all could hear. Righteously or not, the anger still burned in him. "Surgeon Major Keller here is under arrest and in your charge. He is not to leave these grounds here without my specific permission. If he should attempt to leave you will take whatever steps may be necessary to detain him. Is that clear?"

"Yes sir," they answered in wooden duet.

Marlowe glanced at Keller, but the latter was already busy and paying no attention to the dialogue. He swung himself into the saddle and turned his horse. In the center of town a great and growing cloud of smoke was climbing slowly skyward. He was suddenly aware, surprisingly aware, that the firing had stopped entirely and now he could hear occasional distant shouts, men calling inquiries and information to each other. Secord caught sight of him, raised a hand in signal. Who, Marlowe thought with sad bitterness, was the God-damned idiot who had proclaimed that war brings to the fore man's noblest instincts? He rode on to meet Secord.

Nothing like this had ever happened in or to Newton; nothing like it would again. The inhabitants had, not unnaturally, been variously amazed, panicked, and frightened, when the brigade moved into action just after daybreak. But the excitement had waned with time, or at least altered its character—a high emotional pitch can be maintained only so long at a time. The emotion diminished most markedly when it became evident that the marauders intended no harm to civilians as long as they minded their own business. In fact, quite the contrary. For while riders patrolled the streets and the outskirts of the town, when

HAROLD SINCLAIR

embers from the burning freight house set fire to the porch of a nearby residence, an officer had ordered a bucket brigade of troopers into action and doused the fire within minutes.

Once the tension had relaxed somewhat the Newtonians, most of them, decided they might as well enjoy the catastrophe which wasn't their responsibility. These mud-encrusted Yankees, to be sure, were laying waste to the Southern Railroad with furious enterprise, but then a railroad is not a personal thing like a cow, a buggy, or an old washtub. Of course much of Newton publicly bemoaned the damage to their railroad but there was nothing personal in it.

In a slightly different way that was also true of their feeling about their own surrendered troops. There were two companies of a Georgia regiment under a youthful Major Rawlings. Hopelessly outnumbered, with five dead and thirteen wounded, the tight-lipped young major quit. Lieutenant Colonel Fairlie, of the Second, took the surrender and along with it exacted the parole of some eighty-odd officers and men—their arms were smashed into junk and tossed into the burning freight house. Newton took the Confederate wounded into their homes as they would have the victims of a train wreck. These men had been here only two days, none was from the neighborhood or even known here, and on top of that they were *Georgians*. Newton felt sorry for the boys, of course, but there was nothing personal involved here either.

. . . With dispassionate curiosity Marlowe had watched—contemplated, perhaps, would be more accurate—the busy scene of destruction. He had often marveled, especially since becoming part of war himself, at the tremendous difference in the time required to build a thing—anything—and the time needed to destroy it.

Mentally the colonel tallied the results of the morning's work: a \$100,000 or so in the destroyed cotton warehouse, another \$100,000 or so in destroyed railroad property, destruction of badly needed Confederate supplies in an amount impossible to calculate. Moreover, the cost to the Confederacy could not ac-

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

tually be computed in dollars—even more important was the time and difficulty involved in replacement. Railroad iron and telegraph wire, for example, were next to impossible to obtain in the Confederate South at any price.

There was also the matter of casualties to the Georgia infantry and their subsequent parole, but Marlowe was aware that this was hardly important militarily. It would get into his report, supposing he was fortunate enough ever to get as far as a report, but it was hardly of earth-shaking consequence.

At least one problem had been disposed of, or at any rate dealt with—the wounded. They were going back north, to La Grange (Marlowe sincerely hoped), with Captain Brant and K Company of the First as convoy. Left here, even in willing hands, they were certain to be prisoners in a matter of hours. In consideration of the rights of the majority he couldn't jeopardize the "safety" of the brigade with this added burden, and yet these men were entitled to no less than a chance to get out. A chance, for that matter, was all any of them had now.

The local tavern was little more than a glorified boarding-house but it did have a small liquor bar. Marlowe dropped a greenback on the counter. "Just leave the bottle here, Mister."

"My God!" Secord breathed wearily. "I'd sit down but I doubt that I'd ever get up again."

"Better not then," Marlowe said. "Your men all back in now?"

Both Gray and Secord nodded and Gray chuckled grimly. "The Rebs will be huntin' rails and telegraph wire from now on, Jack. I figure we tore up about four miles before we finally quit. Found a hundred-foot bridge just east of town too. But gentlemen, if you ask me, there's gonna be some mighty irritated people around here before long—and I don't mean civilians."

"I figure we've been borrowing time for two or maybe three hours already," Marlowe agreed.

They had a last round and returned to the street.

"I've been figuring up, in case anybody's interested," Secord said. "As of now the first thing I'm gonna do is go home and

HAROLD SINCLAIR

any sleep. Thirty hours, over fifty miles, and a lot of damned hard work. As usual I'm not trying to tell you your business, Jack, but the flesh can only take so much, mine included."

"It'll have to take a little more, just the same," Marlowe said, "including yours. Right now the thing we need most between us and Newton is distance, the more the better. The horses, most of them, thank God, have had some rest here—not enough of the right kind but still rest. Well, find a bugler and let's get on the road again. We'll take the Meridian road out of town for the sake of appearances, then we'll see."

Five miles east of Newton they swung abruptly south, through Garlandville, and then somewhat to the southwest. At dusk they were still on their feet but literally staggering, with horses becoming more and more unwilling. Some men, perhaps the lucky ones, had slept in their saddles for hours. Marlowe himself dozed occasionally but his will always drove him awake again within moments. Calculating again from the tattered map, he was astonished to find that, when they passed through Garlandville, they had covered more than sixty-five miles since yesterday morning.

Marlowe's mind was made up now: it was to be Baton Rouge. The Rebels, at last meager report, still had posts as far down on the Mississippi as Port Hudson, and in south-central Louisiana—Mississippi as far south as the northern shore of Lake Ponchartrain. Federal forces had held New Orleans for almost a year but, except as far up the river as Baton Rouge, hadn't made much progress in extending their hold on the rest of Louisiana. Now for the brigade Marlowe decided it would be Baton Rouge or nothing. Once here in southwestern Mississippi, which they were in fact, there was no place else they could go.

THE PURSUIT

So great was the consternation created by this raid that it was impossible to obtain any reliable information of the enemy's movements, rumor placing him in various places at the same time.

From Lieutenant General J. C. Pemberton's official report of the Vicksburg Campaign.

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

Confederate troops did descend on Newton from both east and west, Meridian and Jackson, in fact those from Meridian arrived little more than an hour after the brigade had turned south away from the railroad. But it was no more than the usual barnlocking gesture. They were only a small infantry force and they had no chance of catching a cavalry brigade, even had they known where to begin looking for it. Meridian had already been stripped of the bulk of its available troops—particularly those sent north on the M. & O. and temporarily isolated at Macon by A Company. These troops under General Loring were still busily looking for the brigade where it was not.

From the Confederate point of view, especially that of the officers personally hunting the phantom brigade of horse, it would have been much better if General Pemberton had confined himself to the immediate defense of Vicksburg. For here on the ground the responsible officers were buffeted between what common sense dictated they do in order to intercept the brigade and what Pemberton, in natural anxiety and from a great distance, telegraphed they must do.

One of his more fanciful notions was that Marlowe somehow intended to seize and occupy Jackson, the state capital, and he exhorted Governor Pettus to call the citizenry there to arms. There is no record of what he thought Marlowe would possibly want with Jackson, even supposing he was able to take it. On the other hand, and in especial contradiction to the Jackson notion, Pemberton, like Hurlbut, assumed that Marlowe would try to return more or less as he had come, through northern Mississippi. To head that off he ordered Chalmers and 1,500 cavalry, from Panola, on the Mississippi Central Railroad, all the way across to Okolona, on the line of the M. & O. (Fortunately for Colonel Blaney, by the time Chalmers got there the Second Iowa was already thirty miles to the north and almost back to La Grange.) Tilghman was ordered from Canton eastward to Carthage, nearer to Marlowe's supposed return route; and Featherston's brigade was moved from Fort Pemberton on the Yazoo River to Granada for the same reason. One of the few things all this proved was Marlowe's original --

the first few days, it would be easier for him to fly than move the brigade back the way they had come, or by way of northern Alabama either.

Far to the south, in the boot of Louisiana, just in case, Gardner on the twenty-fourth, the day Marlowe struck Newton, was ordered eastward from Port Hudson to Tangipahoa, on the New Orleans & Jackson Railroad; and from Ponchatoula, south almost to the shore of Lake Pontchartrain above New Orleans, Simonton was ordered north to join Gardner. Probably at no other time in this bitter four-year contest were so many set to catch so few—and with such poor luck. By the time he struck Newton the Confederate actually engaged in hunting Marlowe could have eaten the brigade's horses at one sitting.

The Sniper

Bryce, in the beginning, took for granted that A Company would overtake the column. It would hardly be as simple as a trip to the post office but it would be done. There was the inexorable arithmetic of distance, but of course Colonel Marlowe had been right when he pointed out that A Company, with thirty-odd men, was far more mobile than the brigade.

As for A Company, they did not regard Captain Bryce as an omniscient superman—they were hardly as unsophisticated as that. They didn't think General Grant was omniscient either, in fact they knew better. But had the question arisen, Asa Bryce would have been re-elected company commander without a dissenting vote. It is a commonplace that soldiers become accustomed to obedience to orders and discipline, but beyond obeying orders they also come to rely on them. So it was with A Company. They would follow Captain Bryce without question as long as he was in the saddle. But more than that, and without either of them being altogether aware of it, the captain would also carry them a little.

This area of Noxubee and Neshoba counties was one of the most sparsely settled in all Mississippi. Still moving cross coun-

try, Bryce led the company, literally, with Lieutenant Rogers taking care of the rear. As long as he led them—he didn't insist on formation, merely that they keep reasonably together—he could be sure they were making the best possible speed. If he let someone else set the pace he could not be certain. The men would curse him privately but they would keep up. They would not, at least not yet, admit that they had less stamina than the captain.

He knew little or nothing about Newton except that it was, had been, the colonel's target point on the Southern. It couldn't be much of a place. Still, the population of almost any town outnumbered them. No use courting trouble there.

By-passing Decatur to the east, they continued to stay away from the main road south and came to the Southern right of way around noon. Out of sheer curiosity they moved eastward a little way along the ruined line. To anyone with a penchant for wrecked railroads, this was a work of art. As old hands themselves, A Company could only admire a really professional job.

Bryce had a different feeling of satisfaction. As of now they were squarely on the trail of the brigade. Of course he had known very well that the Old Man was heading for Newton, but a lot of things *might* have happened to the brigade since A Company parted company with it.

As they moved around a wooded bend the captain gave his piercing whistle and held up a warning arm. A half-mile or so down the ruined track there was an engine—probably with cars behind it, smoking but apparently at a halt, with a small swarm of men in front of it. Apparently that was the eastern limit of the damage. Rogers rode up, and Bryce said, "Repair crew, looks like—and man, they sure got their work cut out for them. End of the line for us. Let's cut back south again."

They rode through a timber belt and presently emerged on the Meridian road. None of them were expert trackers but they didn't have to be to know that the brigade had passed this way. Bryce was momentarily puzzled by the fact that the trail led toward Meridian. It didn't make too much sense. Me-

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

ridian had never been on the agenda, it was almost sure to be rather heavily garrisoned, and the Old Man was no reckless daredevil; he had guts to spare but he wasn't crazy.

A quarter mile farther on he had the answer. A second road forked to the right, toward the southeast and away from the direction of Meridian, and the brigade had obviously taken it. He experienced an actual physical feeling of relief. Offhand it seemed hardly possible to miss an entire brigade of cavalry, even a half-strength brigade; but if half the Rebel troops in Mississippi could overlook it, and apparently they had so far, then certainly one lone company could.

The rain caught them a half-hour beyond the road fork. It wasn't too bad, considering. Just a steady fall that washed the roadside foliage and brought the spring odor of growth to their nostrils. They got wet, naturally, and they rode with heads and shoulders bent, but the water actually flushed away some of the accumulated dirt and grime.

The sound of a rifle shot was as suddenly shocking as a fire bell in church. Bryce set his startled horse almost back on its haunches. "Nate!" he snapped at Sergeant Brown, "take your platoon and see if you can find that bushwhacker! Fast—before the sonofabitch gets away!"

This was open country here, that is not solidly timbered but dotted with clumps of trees and brush. There was plenty of cover yet it didn't seem that a man could move very far without being seen by the circling horsemen. They wasted a valuable twenty minutes without finding the slightest indication of where the shot had come from. It didn't seem possible but there it was.

"I dunno, Cap'n," Nate said in a worried tone, "didn't find hide nor hair of a thing. Could've been some smart damn'-fool kid. I dunno what else."

"Well—let's hope it's not something worse," Bryce said. "I'd just about as soon be shot as scared half to death. Let's get the hell out of here!"

It was still raining, gently enough but steadily, what farmers consider the finest kind of rain. Almost exactly a half-hour

later the second *wheeee* jerked them out of the state into which they had gradually relaxed again. Bryce cursed bitterly and this time turned loose the entire company, including himself. But again they found absolutely nothing, though they circled far beyond normal rifle range.

Bryce faced the men. "Like Nate said, that first one could have been a stray, or some crazy kid, but that couldn't happen twice. Now, by God, keep you heads up and your eyes open. First platoon right, second left. When we get that bird he's going to be a dead duck. Now watch it!"

It was all he could do, obviously, but of course he had the helpless feeling that it wasn't enough. Within their normal limits as men A Company wasn't afraid of anything much that it could see, but this was something else. Bryce could sense the tension in the files behind him. Behind him? He could feel it even more in himself.

The mud splattered under the hoofs and the rain came down benignly. When Nate Brown thought he caught a smoke puff from the corner of an eye he checked his horse instinctively. The animal minced in the road and its rump swung into the leg of Private Stumm who, as usual, had been riding almost knee to knee with the sergeant. Nate, along with everybody else, heard this third report but it was only later that he realized there had been no going-away *wheeee* as before.

Eddy Stumm said, "Nate—Nate, I—!" and there was such a strange urgency in his voice that the sergeant instantly swung around in the saddle. The boy's eyes had an oddly intent look. He put out a hand as though to steady himself on some support that wasn't there. Then the bright blood gushed from his mouth, down over the silky yellow beard and the faded tunic, and Nate caught him as he started to topple from the saddle. For an instant Nate too was frozen into immobility as the warm blood ran across one of his bare hands and down the saddle skirt.

Then Nate came to life and said passionately, "God damn it! Somebody help me hold him!"

Two troopers rode in and held the boy until Nate could dis-

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

mount, then they let go when Nate said, "I got him," and let the body slide gently into his oaken arms.

When Bryce had finished calling orders to Lieutenant Rogers and Sergeant Baker about this third pursuit, he dismounted and led his horse over to the roadside. Nate had laid Stumm on the thick wet grass and was down beside him on one knee. For a long moment the captain said nothing. Perhaps more than anyone else he knew how tough Nate Brown had stood like a hard but gentle older brother to Stumm—bawling him out, ragging him, prodding him, and always with an invisible hand under his elbow.

Finally the captain said quietly, "Well?"

Nate stood up and shrugged wearily. "Nothin', Cap'n. Lungs. You don't get up from one in there. He was done for before I got him outta the saddle."

"Well—"

"We'll have to bury him, Cap'n."

"Well, naturally—"

"I mean bury him, Cap'n. I—we can't just stick the—him in the ground, Cap'n."

"All right, Nate," Bryce said heavily. "I'll see what we can do. Take a look around and see if you can find a place. Get what help you need when the boys get back."

. . . Presently Nate found a spot a little way back from the road, a low knoll partly surrounded by white dogwood. He drew his saber and marked off a proper rectangle, then mowed off the ground growth with the blade. The rain was still falling and it was slow, dirty work with only the small entrenching shovels and the saber blades for tools, even after Hayes and Dormire joined him.

Once Hayes sat back on the muddy edge of the hole and said wearily, "Hell, Sarge, don't you figure this is deep enough?"

"Deeper, damn it!" the sergeant snarled savagely. "I'll get it done right, by God, if I have to stay here all night!"

As with others so with young Stumm—there were deaths and deaths. Nate wrapped the boy's body in the blankets he

wouldn't need now, all but his booted lower legs, and other hands helped him lower the body so it wouldn't fall.

A Company gathered silently, solemnly, men leading horses by the bridle reins. Someone removed his hat and the others, glancing at each other a little furtively, followed suit.

Bryce looked around the rough semicircle and cleared his throat. "I'm afraid I'm not very good at this," he said, realizing how awkward he was sounding, "and in any case this isn't a regulation military affair. So if any of you men—?" He left the question hanging there.

Men looked at the ground, at the gray sky, at each other, but nobody said anything.

"You, Nate?"

"Naw, Cap'n. I could—I reckon it's up to you."

The captain sighed. Yes, it was up to him. He cudgeled his tired brain, trying to remember. It didn't have to be a classic, of course, but it had to be something.

"Very well then—

". . . Almighty God, I—we commit to Thy care the—the immortal soul of Private Edward Stumm, late of the First Illinois Volunteer Cavalry. He was a good soldier, Lord, and deserves well of Thee.

". . . 'The mighty God, even the Lord, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

". . . 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

". . . 'Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father—

". . . 'The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

". . . 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

". . . 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the word of the Lord, for—
forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

"Uh—'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the

Holy Ghost. As it was in the—in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end—' ”

He hesitated, staring unseeingly at the wet grass. “And may the Lord have mercy on us all. Amen.”

He turned and looked at Nate. “I guess we could fire the salute, but—”

“Naw,” the sergeant said—it would make a terrible racket and besides they would probably need the ammunition. “I—I was thinkin’—maybe Shorty could blow a taps on his mouth organ.”

And so it was.

Bryce glanced at the open grave and said, “Have the boys—”

“I’ll finish it up, Cap’n,” Nate said quickly. “You all go ahead. I’ll catch up with you.”

Three quarters of an hour later Nate splashed up alongside the captain. “I’m much obliged, Cap’n. I know you went out o’ your way.”

“All right.” Bryce didn’t look at him. He couldn’t recall a casualty quite so affecting. In fact, A Company, fortunately, hadn’t had a single casualty since the previous December. That was at some place called Stony Creek in Tennessee, when all one afternoon they had fought a savage rear-guard action in a blinding snowstorm and left not only the dead behind them but the wounded as well. That was the one which had almost wrecked the company and reduced it to its present bottom strength.

“I guess I didn’t think of it before,” Nate said almost apologetically. “The boys find anything?”

“No, nothing—not a God-damned sign of anything.”

Nor did they ever. But there was no more phantom shooting.

Again this morning Bryce had them on the road a little before daybreak. Somewhere not too far ahead lay the Strong and Pearl rivers. He didn’t know their exact location nor their relative size; he did know they were rivers of consequence and that if they didn’t find a quick way across these streams—

they were bound to be high because of the season—A Company was likely to find itself in a bad, and perhaps final, corner. Well, these were bridges to be crossed when they got there—in this case he could only hope the bridges would actually *be* there.

The road crossed a shallow river, ordinarily no more than a creek, and then turned right again along the bank. They came to a house a few hundred yards farther on. It stood on a nice little rise, at the end of a slightly curving lane, and the road ran between it and the river. "House" seemed to describe the dwelling more accurately than mansion, but it was still the most imposing place they had seen for days. A wisp of smoke drifted from one of the chimneys but otherwise, from the road, they could see no other sign of life.

He lifted a hand and the company stopped in its weary tracks. For a long moment Bryce sat contemplating the house, then slid stiffly to the ground. The spring morning was so quiet they could hear the gurgling sound of the shallow river a hundred yards to their right.

"Place sure looks prosperous enough to feed one half-strength company," he said to Rogers, "and I promised we'd make a special effort today. This looks like too good a chance to pass up. Plenty of grass and water right here. Let the stock graze while I have a look at the situation up there."

"Better take a little help with you, just in case."

"I'm going to. Sergeant," Bryce called to Nate Brown, "bring Haney and Morris and let's take a walk up that lane."

They stumped up the drive, their weariness showing in their halting gait. The men waited while Bryce went on up the broad steps and across the veranda to the pair of entrance doors. There was still an air of great quiet and Bryce thought, Well, I'll sure wake somebody—and he slammed the polished brass knocker almost viciously. The door opened almost instantly—he guessed the man had been waiting within reaching distance of the knob. The saffron-colored Negro looked at the captain with what seemed to be a mixture of curiosity, fright, and—could it be?—hostility.

"Yes suh?"

"Is your—" Bryce stopped. Somehow the word "master," even in this context, always gagged him a little. "Is the proprietor here?"

"Why, no suh. Not right now, but—"

"That will do, Jason. Please show the officer in. I'll speak to him."

The feminine voice was obviously not youthful—Bryce couldn't see the owner yet—but it had a wonderfully pleasing, bell-like quality, the sort of voice one automatically associated with what one thought of as a Lady.

The Negro turned slightly away from Bryce and said, "But, ma'am, you know Miss Ellen—"

"Nonsense, Jason. Show the gentleman into the blue parlor."

Bryce had a feeling that the Negro would still have barred him if he could. But there wasn't much he could do about it and Bryce didn't give him a chance anyway. He stepped into the hall and pushed the door all the way back in so doing. The butler seemed to shrug inwardly as he moved out of the way. Sun slanted on the polished floor as it streamed through a fanlight at the far end of the wide hall. Bryce felt a sudden acute sense of embarrassment—he was filthy from head to foot and one of his spurs had come loose and was dragging a little on the shining floor.

A few steps beyond the wide archway to the parlor the woman turned to face him. She was fiftyish, he guessed. Her hair was very white, combed back severely and parted in the center, and was in startling contrast to her remarkably blue eyes. Her face was marked with myriad lines, especially about her mouth, but it was plain that once, perhaps not even so long ago, she had been a very beautiful woman.

Bryce shifted his hat from his right hand to his left and said, "I must apologize for the intrusion, ma'am. I'm Captain Bryce, of the First Illinois Cavalry—"

"Why, nonsense, Captain," she said brightly. "You're more than welcome. There, try that sofa; you look tired. Oh—I'm Mrs. Lawton, Mrs. *General* Lawton."

Temporarily numb with wonder, the captain sat. Of course he had often heard of families here in the deep South who were wholeheartedly Union, although he had not personally encountered any. Yet he had a strong feeling that that was not what applied here. Before he could re-form his thoughts she said, "May I offer you some refreshment? But what am I thinking? Jason!"

The man appeared in the doorway. "Ma'am?"

"Fetch the whisky for Captain Bryce, please—the *old* whisky, mind, Jason."

The man bowed slightly and disappeared.

"Mrs. Lawton, as I said, I'm from the First Illinois and I wouldn't trouble you except that—"

"Yes, of course, so I understood. Naturally, I saw your men from the window. We are isolated here, you know, and news reaches us slowly. But it is a pleasure to welcome you to our country here. Frankly, I had not heard that Illinois had come into our glorious Confederacy, but I have always felt it was merely a matter of time. Quite a number of my mother's family—they were East Tennessee people—removed there. In the forties, I believe it was—"

Bryce swallowed hard, hunting for words. "Madam, I feel I owe you an explanation of my situation—"

"Of course. I'll be most interested—if you can spare the time. Oh, here's Jason."

The man put the tray on the parquetry-inlaid table within Bryce's reach and removed the stopper from the cut-glass decanter.

"Please help yourself, Captain," she said. "I know this is—what should I say?—not quite proper in the ordinary sense. But it is wartime, after all. So many of the usual amenities seem not to apply. But of course this is an occasion of sorts, at least for me."

The aroma of the spirits reached his nostrils and he suddenly wanted a drink badly—not an ordinary occurrence with him. "Well, then—with your permission, Madam."

"By all means. This unreasonable war, Captain, has been a difficult thing for me personally. I try not to complain, and of course I'm only one of many, but one may as well face the truth. My husband—he was General Miles Lawton—lost his life at that place called Pittsburgh Landing. He was on the staff of our General Albert Sidney Johnston. You didn't know him, my husband, I mean?"

"No," Bryce said. His collar seemed to be choking him almost to suffocation. "No, I'm afraid not, Madam. I was—there were a great many men involved there, you know. Er—may I?" He indicated the decanter. The whisky had proved to be smooth and velvety beyond belief.

"By all means, Captain. But you were there, at Pittsburgh Landing?"

"Yes," he said. Yes, God help him, he had been there and part of him always would be—or a part of Shiloh would always be with him.

"It was the more difficult for me," she went on quite calmly. "My son and my son-in-law were also killed there. Of course they did not hold the rank my husband did. Naturally. So much younger men—one learns how to go on, you know. One must. I'm afraid I was very foolish at first. In fact, I wrote several letters to General Johnston—I had met him at an affair in New Orleans some years ago. A charming man—charming. But I received no answer. Perhaps—in fact I'm sure now—I didn't quite realize how desperately the general's time is taken up with more important affairs than mine. He *is* our most important commander, is he not?"

He suddenly realized. God above! Johnston had died there in the shot-riddled timber at Shiloh, his jack boot running over with blood that would not stop flowing, exactly a year and—let's see—yes, a year and twenty days ago.

"Madam, I am more sorry than I can say, believe me. If I had known—"

"Nonsense, young man. But you must have business to attend and here I've been dwelling on these purely private mat-

ters of the past. My daughter Ellen—Mrs. Pleasants—will be back shortly. She went this morning to pay a call on an ailing neighbor. She will very much want to meet you, I'm sure. But you'll be staying to dinner and I must see to the servants. I didn't realize—here it is after eleven now. Oh, your men are included, but of *course*."

"I'm afraid that's out of the question—"

But she had risen and he perforce rose with her.

"Jason!" she called, and again the butler appeared almost instantaneously. "Jason, please conduct Captain Bryce to the gentlemen's accommodation and see that he has what he needs. Then when Miss Ellen comes in tell her I want to see her immediately. I'll be in the kitchen for the next few minutes."

Well—well? It was a relief to have her gone, yet somehow it seemed to him that he couldn't simply walk out the front door, no matter how much he wanted to. And come hell or high water there was still A Company to be fed.

He followed the saffron Negro back into the hall and paused a moment by the open front door. One of the men, Haney, was fast asleep, sprawled across the steps. "Sergeant," he said quietly, and Nate looked up from his dozing. "Take it easy for a little longer. Send a man to tell Rogers this'll take awhile."

"Everything all right, Cap'n?"

"Pretty soon," Bryce said obliquely.

He followed the man Jason up the broad stairs and along the upper hall to a large, cool bedroom.

"I'll have watuh an' towels direc'ly, Cap'n. You want a razuh?"

"No—I won't have time for that."

He pushed the door almost shut, unbuckled and hung up his saber-pistol belt, and peeled off the almost stiff tunic.

The Negro came back quickly and silently, bearing towels and a pitcher of very hot water which he placed on the mahogany washstand.

Then the man, apparently summoning some secret courage, looked squarely at him and said, "Cap'n, you knows—'bout

her, I mean?" He nodded slightly in the general direction of belowstairs.

"Certainly I know—now!" Bryce snapped. "Do I look like a damned fool? But I didn't know when I came to the door. How the hell would I?"

The Negro seemed to relax visibly. "Why, no suh—cose not," he said respectfully.

"I didn't come here to pay a social call either," the captain went on. "You're smart enough to know that. You saw the men outside and in the road. But we're not Yankee savages either, even if we do look like it."

"No *suh!*" Jason agreed earnestly.

"All right. But my men are hungry as dogs. That's my business here and I don't intend to forget that for *any* reason. You're the major-domo here, I take it. You know how much it takes to feed thirty-five hungry men. They'll need supper too. See that the stuff gets put on your kitchen gallery and I'll send a detail after it. In the circumstances I'd hate to have to send a bigger detail to work over your smokehouse and pantry in person, but I *could*. Do you follow me?"

"I'll manage, Cap'n," Jason said quietly.

When Bryce presently returned to the parlor the lady wasn't there—yet in a sense she was too, the Mrs. General Lawton of twenty-five years ago. The girl turned quickly at the sound of his footsteps in the hall and a hand went to her throat as he came toward her. Her hair was arranged the same as her mother's, except its color was a midnight black. Her eyes were the same wide electric blue and she was beautiful in spite of her look of worry, of inner retreat.

"Captain, please," she said swiftly, directly, "I have just come in and talked with my mother and I must explain—"

"No," he interrupted, "that's hardly necessary. I'm not altogether stupid and I talked to your man Jason. In fact, I made certain arrangements with him. I hope you will not dislike me too much"—why was he saying this last?—"because there is nothing you can or I will do about it."

"I'm afraid I don't understand, sir."

"It's very simple, Mrs. Pleasants. My men are hungry and this establishment is going to feed them. That was my sole reason for stopping here."

She started slightly at his use of her name. "I don't see—but really we have almost nothing to spare, sir. And surely you haven't any right—"

"Right has nothing to do with it," he said, suddenly harsh, "and I have no choice."

"I still don't quite understand," she said in a voice that seemed obviously puzzled, and honestly so. "I—I went to see some friends this morning and those Yankee soldiers hadn't molested them at all—"

"What? What the devil are you talking about?" In his sudden excitement he took a sudden, almost threatening step toward her, though he had no slightest thought of threat.

"Why, Mr. Gilmore said there were literally hundreds of Yankee riders went past his place and they didn't even stop except a couple of them to inquire about the road. He found out this morning that they took his only two horses but—"

"For Christ's sake!" he said, oblivious of the company. In his excitement he took another step toward her and seized her by the wrist, not thinking of her at all now in the personal sense. She drew a startled breath as she snatched her arm away.

"Where? Where was this?" he demanded harshly.

"Why, on the Cedar Springs road, about two miles north of us here—"

"Yes—yes, and when?"

"Yesterday evening, I think he said, some time just before dark. He knew they were Yankees—he could see that plain enough, but at least they didn't steal anything—well, nothing except the horses."

He made a small gesture toward her wrist. "I'm sorry," he said, "for that. This is terribly important to us. But as for stealing—we do what we have to in the circumstances and we didn't make those. At another time and place, Mrs. Pleasants,

I'm sure meeting you would have been a most rewarding experience. Believe me, if I had known about your mother I would have done this differently. Well—"

"If you've finished, why don't you go?" she said steadily.

He bowed stiffly, turned on his heel, and strode out of the parlor. What else was there to do?

Down at the roadside Rogers rolled over on his back and said amiably, "Well, where in hell you been—making a private peace treaty with Jeff Davis?"

"None of your God-damned business," Bryce said with quiet savagery.

Rogers popped upright and exclaimed, "Well, I'll be teetotally damned! Now what've I done?"

"Forget it," Bryce said apologetically. "I've got some news that changes a number of things. Now listen—"

So it was Rogers who took a detail and picked up the forage from the rear gallery of the house—taking Captain Bryce at his word, Jason had performed handsomely. Evidently he figured he'd better. And while he was at it the lieutenant stole three fresh horses—or rather he traded their three worst nags for three fresh ones. Standard procedure.

Rogers wouldn't care, Bryce told himself. The house and its occupants meant nothing to him, just another relay stop on the road to wherever they were going. Perhaps, just then, he could not have explained his own feeling about the two women, but he would personally have starved before going back to the house.

"See anybody up there?" he asked when Rogers returned.

"Just a smart-looking nigger in a fancy striped weskit," Rogers said cheerfully. "You must have twisted somebody's arm clear up to his neck—or was it hers? Got three man-sized hams, to say nothing of a bushel of yams and a lot of other plunder. Say, not bad-looking horses, huh? Too bad there weren't more of 'em. You know, I been thinking, maybe after the war I'll take up horse stealin' as a regular trade. Fully experienced man."

"Let's move on a piece," Bryce said sourly. "I guess we have

to steal people's grub but we don't have to insult them by eating it on their front lawn."

A half mile or so farther on they stopped again. Bryce, in spite of his own hunger, was anxious to get on but he allowed the men to make the most of the occasion. They would later travel the better for it.

Something over a mile to the north at the next crossroad they found the trail of the brigade. This time there was no mistaking it—a blind man could have found it with his hands—the deep dust of the road marked with hundreds of hoofprints, the kind of trail left only by a really sizable body of cavalry.

The captain knew what he had to do now. He leaned on his saddle pommel and looked them over man by man, trying to make a choice. He would have picked Sergeant Brown as a matter of course but didn't feel like sparing him. The sergeant was a man to have beside you when you needed a man. He said, "Sergeant Baker, Privates Monahan and Burke. Unload your gear and split it up among the rest of the boys to carry for you. Keep your pistols and if you don't have a few extra rounds, get them from somebody else. Switch your horse gear to the three horses Lieutenant Rogers just requisitioned at that last place we stopped—they look pretty good. The track of the column is right there in front of you. All you have to do is ride like hell until you catch the brigade—and don't spare the horses."

"Yes sir," Baker said eagerly. "What'll I tell the Old—I mean Colonel Marlowe or Major Gray?"

"Tell him we're on our way—oh, hell, he'll know that anyway. Just say this: 'Captain Bryce's compliments and he respectfully requests that A Company be allowed to burn its own bridges from here on.' He'll understand that."

"We're on our way, Captain!"

And within minutes they were. The rest of A Company gave them a cheer as the thick dust swirled under the hoofs.

The Prodigals

Colonel Marlowe silently cursed the unpredictable geography of rural Mississippi. As usual this failed to alter the tactical situation but it relieved his feelings.

Now in the back of his mind was the gradually growing fear—no, that was hardly the word for it yet—that his—their luck was due to run out any time. Already he'd had more than his share, more than he had any right to expect, and he knew it.

He did not consider himself in a predicament yet but the situation had all the makings of one.

Somewhat against his better judgment he had once more divided his force, temporarily, of course—if I keep doing this, he reminded himself, I'll wind up as a one-man cavalry expedition. Now he waited it out near the middle of the ten-mile stretch of road which connected the bridge over the Strong River and the ferry crossing at the far wider and deeper Pearl River. Approximately the remaining half of the First Illinois was strung out between this point and the Pearl to the west. Second and the Second were some five miles behind him, at the Strong bridge. Exactly where Gray and the other half of the First were he could only guess—and hope.

The situation had developed in a way he might have foreseen but hadn't. But even if he had foreseen it he did not believe he could have done otherwise; this was simply one of those risks which had to be taken. Back there at the bridge the Strong flowed roughly from north to south. Ten miles west of the Strong bridge the larger Pearl also flowed roughly from north to south but it was not bridged—it could be negotiated here only by a lone horse-powered ferry. Then to really complicate matters further, a mile or so south of the Strong bridge, that is downstream, that river turned almost straight west to join the Pearl. One or two, perhaps even a few, strongly mounted horsemen might have made it across these streams, especially the smaller Strong, by swimming, but for the entire brigade to try it was out of the question. The colonel had to rely on the already provided crossings—anything else was too big a gamble.

This was terrible ground here but even so Marlowe could have swung to his left, southward, and followed around the south bank of the Strong without actually crossing it. That would still have brought him smack against the Pearl, with a possible crossing he knew not where. And cross the Pearl he must if he was to reach Hazlehurst and the New Orleans & Jackson Railroad.

Why not, then, simply plunge on across the Pearl and into Hazlehurst? Well, several reasons. For one thing, they knew there was Rebel force behind them and to the north, near the line of the Southern. How much they didn't know, but they knew it was there—Secord had two companies probing for it right now. This force had smartly stayed east of the Strong, outside the loop formed by the conjunction of the two streams. Elemental, of course, for Secord to destroy the Strong bridge and so leave the pursuing Rebel force outside the loop—except that that would leave the brigade on the inside of the loop with no place to go but ahead. So far Marlowe had gone straight ahead, not stopping once for reasons outside his own control, not even considering a possible line of retreat. This was different. For Hazlehurst ahead, on the N. O. & J., was

hardly more than thirty miles below Jackson; any amount of troops could have been moved down there in less than two hours. For all Marlowe knew, up to now that is, Hazlehurst and the railroad might very well be swarming with Rebel force. They had the previous night, some of them, moved as far forward as the east bank of the Pearl but for good reasons could go no farther then—and if the brigade should be caught between the railroad and the bottleneck at the Pearl ferry, then a smart Rebel commander, one with sufficient force at his disposal, could make hash of the brigade. Or if he was caught with rivers on three sides of him, with Jackson and the Southern on the fourth side—particularly if he had destroyed the Strong bridge—then no miracle he could imagine would save him there either. Whether his invisible opponents were working toward this end the colonel could not know; he had to go on the theory that they might be.

Now much, perhaps everything, depended on what Dick Gray was doing, had done already this morning—and where the devil *was* Gray?

He lay back on the warm grass with his eyes closed but not even dozing now. His mind, tired as it was, was still too active for sleep. Then he came upright, looked around, and said sharply, "Davis!"

"Yes sir," the lieutenant answered wearily.

"How long now since there was any word from Secord?"

"Mmm. Two—no, nearer three hours, Colonel."

"Get a courier back there and see what the devil he's up to now. No, better go see for yourself."

"Yes sir," Davis said, wearier now than ever. He had just gotten soundly asleep for the first time in twenty-two hours.

. . . They had reached the Strong bridge last night some two hours after dark. Leaving the Second there, Marlowe had gone on ahead with Gray and part of the First. It had been almost three hours later when one of the men from the point came back and reported they had reached the Pearl.

"What's there?" Marlowe had asked impatiently.

"Mighty little you can see, sir. The road slopes right down

into the river and o' course she's plenty high now. You can tell where the ferry comes in easy enough, but in this dark that's about all."

"Hm." Marlowe turned to the dark figure that was Major Gray. "Come on, Dick," he said. "Let's have a look for ourselves."

But, as the soldier had reported, there was little to be seen except the dark swift water and a vague line which might have been the far bank.

"God damn it!" Marlowe swore. "The ferry *would* be on the other bank."

. . . At daylight a thick, chilling mist hugged the water but did not obscure the opposite bank. The three point men, still in the civilian dress and with no weapons showing, led their animals to the water's edge and began waving arms and yelling. After what seemed an age a man on the far bank emerged from the ferryhouse, yawned, stretched, and finally produced a team from a lean-to shed. At long last he led the team to the wooden ferry and placed them on the treadmill apparatus. The treadmill in turn was geared to a series of wooden friction pulleys which ran on the guide cable stretching from one bank to the other—in the darkness they hadn't seen the cable the night before. As a vehicle it was very nearly the water-borne version of the oxcart, almost as primitive, as awkward, and if possible even slower.

Here on this side, at the ferry approach, it was quiet as a graveyard. There was plenty of cover and except for Bullen and his cohorts there were no horsemen in sight. The scow finally grounded on the muddy margin and the bewhiskered, one-gallused local Charon said cheerfully, "Mornin', gents. Out a mite early, ain't ye?"

"Some maybe," Sergeant Bullen agreed. "Got some business in Hazlehurst that won't wait too long."

"Un-hunh. Ain't seen nothin' of a big mess o' Yank calvary, have y'all?"

"Why, Godamighty, no!" Andy said innocently. "Is there supposed to be some around?"

"Yup—plenty. So they say anyhow. Feller come all the way out from Hazlehurst las' night'n said be on the lookout for 'em. Dang fool wanted me to cut the ferry line but I told'm he better bring hisself along plenty o' help any time he wanted that done. Why, hell's far, just about as soon cut m'own throat. I tol' him, I said, 'Man, I'll take keer o' any Yanks that shows up at *this* landin'—' "

"Well," Andy said agreeably, "now's your chance to get started, Mister, an' we're in a hellfire hurry." He brought the heavy Navy Colt around from behind him and jammed it hard in the old man's belly.

The business of the pistol was of course pointless. The old man was as harmless as a new pup. The pistol more than anything was a symbol of their utter weariness and tearing impatience of everything.

The ferrying turned out to be a study in slow motion and apparently nothing could be done to speed it up. The leaky hull, even with dangerous crowding, held an absolute maximum of twenty men and horses. The trip across, loaded, required a full six minutes—Marlowe timed it carefully. The trip back empty was a little faster, but the little extra time was more than lost in loading and unloading. Marlowe did rapid mental arithmetic. Five round trips per hour, a maximum total of one hundred men and horses. With A Company still missing the strength of the column still stood at around nine hundred men and horses. He was a little shocked at what the figures added up to.

Marlowe and Gray had crossed in the first load and now the colonel was wearing a path on the far bank with his nervous pacing. Presently he turned abruptly to Gray, who was leaning against a tree with his eyes closed, almost as though in pain.

"Dick!" he said sharply, "this crossing is one hell of a chore. At this rate it'll take better than four hours just to cross the First alone. It would take just exactly the same amount of time to haul 'em back the other way—if it turns out that way. If some real hell should turn up at Hazlehurst and the railroad, and we

should have to back up to here, we'd be cornered like steers in a slaughter pen."

"You put these things so delicately, Jack," Gray said slowly. "But all right. I'm with you so far, but what then?"

Marlowe smiled sardonically. "It occurs to me that if you can't handle Hazlehurst with, say, two hundred men, then it might very well also be too hot for the whole brigade. If you have to come backing out in a hurry it'll be easier to get you back across the Pearl here than it would be the brigade, or even all the First. Do you follow me?"

"If I have to back out—" Gray said slowly, a little stiffly. He was wide awake again now. "Yes, I reckon I follow you all right, Jack. But you could be all wrong—about Hazlehurst, I mean."

"That's right—I could be. So that's why you'll go on to Hazlehurst and find out."

"All right. What, specifically, do you want done—supposing we're in a position to do anything?"

The colonel shrugged, almost as though dismissing the whole matter from his mind. "The usual thing—you know. See what you can learn in general. Tear up as much railroad as you can if you can. After all"—Marlowe grinned at Dick—"we haven't had a chance at a nice railroad since we left Newton and it seems a shame to pass up any opportunities."

As it turned out Major Gray would have had more trouble getting from the suburbs into downtown Chicago than he had getting into Hazlehurst. As was so often the case their chief antagonist was the inexorable arithmetic of time. It had taken from something before six to a little after eight to get his two hundred troopers over the Pearl. The ride to Hazlehurst took them up to eleven o'clock—or rather eleven found them about a mile outside the town while a patrol was sent on a routine reconnaissance of the place. This was simply ordinary procedure.

Actually there wasn't even a corporal's guard here to offer resistance. They simply rode into town without a hand being

raised against them. Small boys and dogs followed their progress from the edge of town, their elders for the most part simply gaped in astonishment, assuming for the moment that these filthy, weary men and horses were some of their own.

Major Gray made a beeline for the railroad station, taking with him Lieutenant Burr of B Company and a Corporal Sweet who was a telegrapher. There was always the chance that the station had already wired a warning somewhere but Gray doubted that.

They walked into the empty station—apparently there was no train due in for at least a while. Gray stood unobtrusively at the ticket window, the others a little to one side. The operator was busy copying something and over a shoulder he said, "Just a minute, please."

Gray glanced inquiringly at Sweet, who had an ear cocked toward the chattering telegraph sounder. Sweet's lips silently formed the words "Train order" and the major nodded.

The operator tapped an acknowledgment, closed the key, and came over to the window. Intent on the train order still in his hand, he hardly looked up as he said, "Yes sir?"

"Could I have a telegraph blank, please?"

"Yes *sir*—right here you are."

"Thanks," Gray said. "By the way, this is official army business. I'm Major Gray, First Alabama Volunteers—" It was often astonishing how much you could get away with if you simply acted as though everything was perfectly normal. "We're hunting the Yankee cavalry that's supposed to be loose around here somewhere. You heard anything about that?"

"Why, some, Major—not a lot. The wire's carried quite a lot of stuff for down below here but when it's not for me I don't pay too much attention if I'm busy. You know how it is."

"Yes, I see. Incidentally, we're from over west, along the river, sort of strangers around here, you might say. Who's in command at Jackson now?"

"Well, o' course Gen'l Pemberton hisself was there for a while—don't know if he is now or not." The agent frowned in concentration. "Last time I had anything for him from here

seems like there was some Colonel Russell. Had charge of the local troops there, I reckon."

"Thanks," Gray said; "that'll do well enough. All right, boys."

Burr opened the door and he and Sweet stepped into the office. The agent turned as he exclaimed, "Here, now y'all wait a minute. This is private—" but that's as far as he went. He'd never had a pair of Colts staring nakedly at him from point-blank range before. He started to raise his arms but Burr said amiably, "Never mind that, Mister. We don't need to make you uncomfortable. We just want to use your telegraph outfit for a little while before we wreck it for you. In fact, you can even sit down—no, over there in that corner."

Gray came in and looked around, paused, and examined a fancifully lithographed pictorial map of the New Orleans & Jackson system. "Well, well," he said, "this might come in handy." After looking carefully at the map for another long moment he took it down, folded it, and thrust it under his belt. Then he took the telegraph form and wrote rapidly. Once he turned to the operator and snapped, "What's your name?"

"Johnson." It came reluctantly.

"All of it!"

"Amos Johnson."

Gray finished the message and handed it to Sweet, saying, "That ought to do it if anything will."

Sweet said to the operator, "What's the Jackson call?"

"JN."

In less than half a minute the Jackson operator answered with a "Go ahead—JN."

Sweet fired it at them:

Colonel Russell,
Commanding CSA Forces,
Jackson

Heavy cavalry force under General Marlowe sighted heading rapidly northeast Strong River bridge direction Brandon or

Morton on Southern ten this morning information just received this office.

Sgd., Amos Johnson, Agent N.O. & J.

A half-hour later the telegraph line was down for a hundred yards and both passenger depot and freight house were well ablaze. From there on they worked methodically on tracks and wire. It was a repetition of Newton but on a small scale and they didn't catch any rolling stock on hand.

It was hot hard work but as usual the men, once they were at it, carried on enthusiastically. Gray was up and down the line, exhorting, giving an order here and there, mostly just keeping an eye on the whole operation. Every now and then he frowned in worried concentration. There was something—something that somehow persisted in eluding his tired mind. There was something he knew he had to do, ought to do, but now it just wasn't there. His eyes felt as though they were loaded with cinders and he wondered a little vaguely if he was feverish.

As Gray lowered his canteen after a long drink he saw, through the drifting smoke, a mounted rider apparently talking to one of his own pickets. There was something familiar about the rider but in the haze and at this distance he couldn't quite recognize him. Even as he watched the man straightened in the saddle, set in his spurs, and tore off toward the east, in the direction of the Pearl crossing.

The major rode quickly over to the picket and said, "Who the devil was that, Keck?"

"Why, Lieutenant Davis, sir, the Old—Colonel Marlowe's aide. He wanted to know what time we got here and if we'd had any trouble, so naturally I told him. I said you was right around somewhere but he said never mind, he was in a hell of a hurry."

The knowledge of what he had done, or, more precisely, *not* done, struck the major's consciousness like a blow in the face. This was what he had tried to remember and somehow failed . . . he had known between eleven and twelve that Hazle-

HAROLD SINCLAIR

hurst was wide open. A single rider pressing a good horse could have had the information, the thing Marlowe needed above all, to the Pearl ferry crossing something after one o'clock. Marlowe would have started the ferrying again and those first across would have been *here* by this time—it was three-thirty now. Gray could see every detail of it in his mind. Marlowe, tired of waiting and sweating it out by the roadside, unable to comprehend, wondering futilely what in God's name could have prevented Gray from getting at least *one* man back, had sent Davis to see for himself, and Davis had to make the entire round trip. The hours of silence would naturally have indicated to the colonel that something was mightily wrong—five full hours they couldn't afford to lose. And Marlowe wouldn't risk ferrying a single other man until Davis got back. Christ's name! Five full hours lost into eternity because he, Dick Gray, was a damned fool who couldn't remember routine procedure. He had been cavorting around Hazlehurst, thinking he was cutting a heroic figure, while the simple truth was that he might, possibly, have put the whole brigade in a hole that even Marlowe's luck couldn't get them out of. There would be five more full hours during which he, Gray, would not dare pull out of Hazlehurst, either forward or back, while even now Rebel troops were probably moving both north and south along the N. O. & J. The whole brigade *could* have been into Hazlehurst and out again—except for the brilliant Major Dick Gray.

He suddenly knew what it was to be simultaneously ill both physically and emotionally.

The permanent colonelcy of the First had never been filled—it had been more or less taken for granted that he, Gray, would have it in the natural course of time. But now—well, the important thing now was his failure, his failure in what was perhaps the worst spot they had been in thus far. Marlowe would be ruthless; he hadn't the slightest doubt of that. The Old Man hadn't hesitated in the matter of Keller, and Keller's temporary defection had been as nothing compared with this.

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

It was almost six-thirty and already the shadows were lengthening rapidly. Here in the bottom of this timber-walled road it was already early dusk. They were standing at the Strong bridgehead and Secord said hotly, "God damn it, Jack! We're lucky they got back at all, let alone late. They rode twenty extra miles and lost six men while they tore up that damned nosy Rebel patrol, then you complain because they're not back when you think they ought to be. By God, I—"

"Forget it, Frank, forget it," Marlowe said wearily. "I'm sorry. We're all a little too close to the end of our tethers. But by God there was a while there a couple of hours ago when I think I could have strangled Gray with my bare hands—"

"Say," Secord said, mollified, "what happened up there anyway? I heard that Hazlehurst was all clear but—"

"That's the whole point. But never mind that now." Marlowe flipped the bridle reins over his horse's drooping neck. "We've got work to do. I wouldn't risk that ferry crossing in the dark but now we have to. Well, the men are more familiar with the ground now and we'll have to risk bank fires for light—"

He broke off as a shot exploded somewhere back down the road and the chorus of yells was set off. Marlowe turned back to Secord and frowned. "Now what the devil is coming off? It doesn't sound—"

In the narrow road men made way for the galloping horses, but the word went ahead faster and presently the two officers caught the gist of it.

"Hey, A—!"

"A Company—!"

"A Company's made it back!"

It rang down the line of the Second like a hallelujah.

A Company, of course, was not back, but most certainly a visible part of it was. Sergeant Baker swung down and saluted and Marlowe offered his hand.

"If I didn't see you myself I'm not sure I'd believe it," the colonel said. "But you're not all of it? I mean—"

"No sir, Colonel. We had three fresh horses and we been floggen' hell out of 'em ever since near noon. The Lord willing, the rest of 'em will be along directly."

"Captain Bryce?" Marlowe said quickly.

"Yes sir. He's all right, Colonel. I mean he's *sure* all right. He sent word—'Cap'n Bryce's compliments and he respectfully requests that A Company be allowed to burn its own bridges from here on in.'"

Marlowe glanced at Secord in the fading light and chuckled wryly. "A nice touch. I appreciate the captain's feelings and I doubt that in his position I'd have been able to put it so diplomatically. Well, Sergeant, it's a good thing you made it when you did or he'd have been too late for this one."

The sergeant looked—he'd been in too much of a hurry before—and swallowed hard. The long wooden bridge was wide enough for only one normal-width vehicle and on half of that they had heaped dry brush from end to end, barely leaving room for two horses closely abreast.

Baker said, "Yes sir, I see."

The colonel sighed. "Well, how far behind would you say they are, Sergeant?"

"Well, not so far probably in miles, sir. It's just that with them wore-out horses they don't make any time."

"You'll have to wait for them, Frank," Marlowe said. "Anyway somebody will. There's no choice now."

"No, not with them this close," Secord agreed. "I'd hope somebody would do the same for me. All right—I'll leave two companies to wait for them and then fire the bridge behind them."

"Good enough," Marlowe said. "You might as well wait here with your men, Sergeant. Get a little rest. Hard to tell when you'll get another chance."

Marlowe moved off down the fast-darkening road, Sergeant King dozing twenty feet behind him. Mentally the colonel damned Gray to hell. If Bryce had taken the majority when it was offered him this possibly, probably wouldn't have hap-

pened. Then he reined in his thought processes abruptly. There was no balancing these things in one's mind. If Gray *had* functioned properly then the Strong bridge would have been charred and useless embers at least two hours ago, and in that case A Company—

He shook his head angrily, almost like a bewildered animal. He thought he had been tired before but it had never been anything like this.

. . . Near two in the morning, somewhere on the road west of Hazlehurst, Sergeant King shook the colonel's shoulder again and then kicked the small fire into fresh life. For an instant the blaze flared up and the light outlined the sergeant's homely features.

"Let it go, Sergeant," Bryce said. "The hell with it. Let him sleep, now he's at it."

"No sir," King said stubbornly. "He said to wake him when you come in, so I wake him if it takes till sunup. 'Course if it does," he added, "I'll catch hell on that account too."

As though waiting for some special signal Marlowe rolled over and came to his feet in one continuous movement. "All right, Sergeant," he said through a stifled yawn. "You made it as usual." He held out a hand and said, "Well, welcome back, Bryce."

"Thanks, Colonel," the captain said dryly, "I appreciate the sentiment."

As surely as he knew his name was Dick Gray he knew he was due to feel Marlowe's wrath. What form it might take was entirely unpredictable but it would come just as certainly as tomorrow's sunrise.

When Marlowe finally rode into Hazlehurst, Gray didn't see him. He did not, in fact, know Marlowe was there until Lieutenant Davis sought him out to deliver a terse order.

"We're going to move on a ways yet tonight," Davis said. "The colonel is worried that with all this delay some force is likely to come down on us from up Jackson way. You are to let

HAROLD SINCLAIR

"No sir, Colonel. We had three fresh horses and we been floggen' hell out of 'em ever since near noon. The Lord willing, the rest of 'em will be along directly."

"Captain Bryce?" Marlowe said quickly.

"Yes sir. He's all right, Colonel. I mean he's *sure* all right. He sent word—'Cap'n Bryce's compliments and he respectfully requests that A Company be allowed to burn its own bridges from here on in.'"

Marlowe glanced at Secord in the fading light and chuckled wryly. "A nice touch. I appreciate the captain's feelings and I doubt that in his position I'd have been able to put it so diplomatically. Well, Sergeant, it's a good thing you made it when you did or he'd have been too late for this one."

The sergeant looked—he'd been in too much of a hurry before—and swallowed hard. The long wooden bridge was wide enough for only one normal-width vehicle and on half of that they had heaped dry brush from end to end, barely leaving room for two horses closely abreast.

Baker said, "Yes sir, I see."

The colonel sighed. "Well, how far behind would you say they are, Sergeant?"

"Well, not so far probably in miles, sir. It's just that with them wore-out horses they don't make any time."

"You'll have to wait for them, Frank," Marlowe said. "Any-way somebody will. There's no choice now."

"No, not with them this close," Secord agreed. "I'd hope somebody would do the same for me. All right—I'll leave two companies to wait for them and then fire the bridge behind them."

"Good enough," Marlowe said. "You might as well wait here with your men, Sergeant. Get a little rest. Hard to tell when you'll get another chance."

Marlowe moved off down the fast-darkening road, Sergeant King dozing twenty feet behind him. Mentally the colonel damned Gray to hell. If Bryce had taken the majority when it was offered him this possibly, probably wouldn't have hap-

pened. Then he reined in his thought processes abruptly. There was no balancing these things in one's mind. If Gray *had* functioned properly then the Strong bridge would have been charred and useless embers at least two hours ago, and in that case A Company—

He shook his head angrily, almost like a bewildered animal. He thought he had been tired before but it had never been anything like this.

. . . Near two in the morning, somewhere on the road west of Hazlehurst, Sergeant King shook the colonel's shoulder again and then kicked the small fire into fresh life. For an instant the blaze flared up and the light outlined the sergeant's homely features.

"Let it go, Sergeant," Bryce said. "The hell with it. Let him sleep, now he's at it."

"No sir," King said stubbornly. "He said to wake him when you come in, so I wake him if it takes till sunup. 'Course if it does," he added, "I'll catch hell on that account too."

As though waiting for some special signal Marlowe rolled over and came to his feet in one continuous movement. "All right, Sergeant," he said through a stifled yawn. "You made it as usual." He held out a hand and said, "Well, welcome back, Bryce."

"Thanks, Colonel," the captain said dryly, "I appreciate the sentiment."

As surely as he knew his name was Dick Gray he knew he was due to feel Marlowe's wrath. What form it might take was entirely unpredictable but it would come just as certainly as tomorrow's sunrise.

When Marlowe finally rode into Hazlehurst, Gray didn't see him. He did not, in fact, know Marlowe was there until Lieutenant Davis sought him out to deliver a terse order.

"We're going to move on a ways yet tonight," Davis said. "The colonel is worried that with all this delay some force is likely to come down on us from up Jackson way. You are to let

the Second go by and then move your men in behind them. There's a small detail still back at the Strong bridge but you needn't wait on them."

"*Behind* the Second, did you say?"

"That's right, Major."

"Very well." The First had led the column for more than ten days, ever since La Grange, but apparently not any longer. "Did the colonel want to see me?"

"Not that I know of," Davis said woodenly. "Leastwise he didn't say so to me."

Was there veiled contempt, animosity in Davis's voice, Gray wondered? It didn't sound like it exactly, but still . . . He wished a little desperately that he could ask Davis what Marlowe had said but of course that was impossible. He said shortly, "Very well, Davis."

The sun this morning rose an angry red and the rain began around eight o'clock. Riding toward the rear of the column now, Gray again failed to see Marlowe until after the rain began. It was around nine o'clock when, a short distance ahead, he spotted King by the roadside, holding the reins of Marlowe's riderless horse. As Gray came nearer the colonel emerged from the roadside brush. He wiped the saddle seat with a dirty handkerchief and had just remounted when Gray pulled out of line and moved over beside him. Sergeant King, his shoulders hunched as though in disgust at the rain, went on slowly down the road.

"Morning, Dick," Marlowe said around his dead cigar. His tone might have been warm or cold but muffled by the cigar it was hard to tell.

Gray was determined to keep this as cool and unemotional as possible. He said, "Well, Jack, hadn't we just as well get it over with now as any time?"

"What was that?" Marlowe said absently. He seemed interested in something on the rain-misted horizon now. "Oh, yes. Well, I wish we could, but I'm afraid it's going to take three or four days yet, even if our luck holds up. I had a vague notion

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

of cutting off here and trying for our lines below Vicksburg, but it simply won't do. We just don't know enough about the situation thereabouts—"

"Damn it, Jack! You know that wasn't what I meant. I'm talking about that damn' fool mistake I made yesterday at Hazlehurst!"

"Oh, yes, that," Marlowe said thoughtfully. He regarded his dead and sodden cigar with distaste, then tossed it aside. "Well, frankly, I haven't had time to give much thought to it. Too many other things on my mind. And you wouldn't want me to go off half-cocked about it, would you, Dick?"

The discussion ended there because the Colonel deliberately slapped his bridle reins and rode off, leaving Gray glaring after him. Moving by back roads and across country, southeast from Union Church to Brookhaven, they came to the latter place late on the afternoon of the twenty-ninth.

At Brookhaven they again made a big hole in the line of the N. O. & J.—someone remarked that they all now regarded railroads not as lines of transportation but something to be torn up as expeditiously as possible. Actually they hardly stopped at Brookhaven. They turned south again here and the physical assault upon the railroad was really no more than a part of the process of moving.

Finding himself again at the head of the column, along with Bryce and the returned A Company, it might have been supposed Gray should have felt relieved to be back in his usual place. Actually he felt no such thing. Perhaps it was simply a matter of natural human perversity. Having been wrongfully removed from his proper place—Gray's reasoning—he was likewise suspicious of the motives which restored him. When Marlowe deliberately switched him after his failure at Hazlehurst he'd assumed it was the Old Man's way of showing he no longer trusted him—*post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Marlowe hadn't said so, had chosen to be maddeningly noncommittal, but there it was. And now, with no word of explanation, he had been put back—and *that* was suspicious. (Actually the switch at Hazle-

HAROLD SINCLAIR

hurst on Marlowe's part had been plain common sense. He wanted Secord out in front because the Second was intact under one command whereas the First was then split into three parts, A Company not having come up yet. At Union Church the First, intact again for the first time in ten days, returned to the lead position. Gray recalled that the First hadn't been returned to the lead until after the arrival of Bryce and A Company. He was quite aware that Marlowe had a high opinion of Captain Bryce as an officer—so did he for that matter. He was also aware that Bryce had refused the majority before it was offered to him. Could it be that the colonel was now trusting him only under the guardian eye of Bryce? In his state of mind it was natural that he should overlook one further possibility, the only one that was actually true—none of these things existed save in Major Gray's tired imagination.

One by-product of all this was that Gray scarcely spoke to Bryce except in the briefest kind of way and when it was necessary in carrying out routine procedure. Bryce didn't mind, in fact he thought nothing of it. For this was generally true of the entire column now. All the way down the line the men had reached a state of fatigue beyond fatigue. There was no more lighthearted humor, no more horseplay, no more snatches of song. Men spoke to each other in monosyllables and then scarcely more than duty required. They performed routine chores almost as a matter of automatic reaction, one result of the long, dull, grueling hours of drill.

Watching them pass by him on the road southwest of Summit on this fresh May day morning, Marlowe wondered if they would be able to whip a first-rate Rebel company should the need arise. He had no idea just how soon he was going to find out.

Somewhere down this endlessly winding green tunnel of pines and white flowering magnolias lay the Tickfaw River. With Bryce and A Company in the advance—the Old Man had warned the captain against the Tickfaw bridge. Not that the bridge itself was important if the stream could be forded, but a

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

bridge was always a logical blockade point. If there were Rebel troops in the area—and Marlowe did not see how there could not be now—the bridge would be the focal point of their activity. So now A Company moved cautiously. Bryce knew the crossing was up ahead; he did not know where it was in relation to his own position.

There was another thing. Although their route was now generally south-southwest, by an accident of topography they were approaching the Tickfaw from the west, moving straight east—these roads wound and twisted here in order to find the high places in this low, swampy country. Somewhere east of the bridge the road would turn south again. But at the point where they turned east, about ten o'clock this morning, another road entered from the west, forming a T intersection. They had halted there for a few minutes when they found Sergeant Nate Brown and Privates Stark and Burris, the point, which had again been established, waiting for them. The Sergeant dismounted, waved his arm from west to east along the road. "Have a look, Cap'n. Horse prints an' horse dung—an' damn' fresh. Cavalry—what else?—an' sure as hell not ours."

Bryce gave the trail only a cursory glance. Brown, having looked intimately at perhaps ten thousand horse hoofs, could read the impressions they made almost better than he could read print. That, among other good reasons, was why Bryce had him out as point.

Bryce nodded and said briefly, "Can you say how many?"

Nate shook his head. "Not too close—at a guess I'd say a couple hundred, but it's a guess, Cap'n."

"All right. Keep going, Nate, but make it single file and keep as far over on one side of the road as you can."

They waited to give Nate a little head start, and Bryce sent a man back to alert the column.

. . . The sergeant moved cautiously but steadily forward, keeping well over to the edge of the road. It was perhaps a half-hour later when he glimpsed a plantation house off to his left, gleaming white in the center of its park of magnolias and acacias; it was several hundred yards from the road.

HAROLD SINCLAIR

It was perhaps a quarter mile farther down the road that they saw the horsemen. They were standing in the road, as though waiting and listening for something. As they came closer Nate could see, in the brilliant near-noon sunlight, the twin gold bars on the collar of the taller of the two riders; the bars twinkled in the brilliant light as the man's horse moved slightly. Nate motioned with a hand for the others to move more slowly.

The officer rose in his stirrups and shouted, "What the hell is going on back there?"

Nate cupped his hands and yelled back, "I can't hear you!"

From here it appeared that the officer was armed only with a pistol, the other trooper only with a carbine or musket on a shoulder sling.

Nate said, "Burris, when we get within jumpin' distance of 'em you cut out the private and keep him covered. Don't fool. If he makes a bad move let him have it. Stark, you an' me'll ride in on the fancy officer an' take him. You go in on his left side and nail his pistol. I'll go in on his right an' get *him*."

Even as the pickets back up the road, these two suspected nothing and it went like clockwork. Burris seized the reins of the private's horse and covered him with his pistol. Nate and Stark moved in on the startled officer knee to knee, and as the man's hand shot toward the holster flap Stark seized his wrist in an iron grip and with his other hand yanked the pistol free. Nate moved to grasp the man's right arm but the officer twisted free and attempted to strike at him. Nate shifted his tactics. His oaklike right arm went around the man's neck—of course both he and Stark were facing the man, literally lifted and dragged him up and out of the saddle and over the horse's rump, let go, and let the officer crash into the dust of the road. They sat their horses and watched passively as the man scrambled to his feet, alternately pale and livid with rage.

"What the hell is the meaning of this? Can't you God-damned stupid conscript hunters see that I'm an army officer? God damn you! I'm Captain Pierre Darbois of the Ninth Louisiana—"

Nate grinned as he interrupted Darbois. "I know, Captain.

But you're mistaken—we ain't huntin' conscripts. Happens you two are prisoners, Captain. This is a detachment out of the First Illinois, Gen'l Marlowe's First Brigade. Burris, take that private's old iron and heave it into the brush. Then you herd these two back up the road. Tell Bryce we'll wait here for them—an' for God's sake for them to keep it quiet. I caught a sight of the bridge up ahead."

When the company came up Nate said to Bryce, "The bridge is there, a little to the left where the road bends a mite again. Me, I say we've rode far enough."

Bryce nodded. "I think so. We'll make it afoot from here on."

They left the horses, drawn into the brush at one side of the road, and went on, one platoon on either side of the road Indian file, taking cover and moving as stealthily as might be.

It wasn't much of a bridge, something more than fifty feet long and perhaps six feet above the present water level. As Bryce and Nate peered cautiously through the screen of brush they could read the story clearly enough. De Beaun's men had obviously wanted to render the bridge useless once they were all across but they hadn't wanted to burn it—in the Confederacy heavy planking, like railroad iron, was hard to come by. Already they had taken down the siding and it was piled carelessly at either end of the bridge, but the floor planking was still intact.

Bryce could see nothing but he knew only too well *they* were there, in the thinner timber and brush on the other side. In a lush magnolia nearby a mockingbird sang with sudden piercing sweetness. Behind them now in the road there was the growing thunder of hoofs, faint at first and then growing in volume. Gray would be along now. He'd dropped back earlier on business with B Company.

"God damn Gray!" Bryce said with quiet savagery. He and Nate were now perhaps a hundred feet from the bridgehead. Bryce caught a metallic glint in the brush on the other side of the little river. He stepped into the road as the major slid his horse to a halt.

HAROLD SINCLAIR

"What's going on here anyway?" Gray demanded, almost as though everything was about to end in violent disaster and it was all the captain's fault.

Farther down the road, too far, Bryce could see the colonel on the outside of the column, passing the files, pounding toward them here.

"We haven't had time to find out yet," Bryce said coolly. "It's dead certain that brush across there is sure death for somebody. If you'll just hold on—"

"Hell!" Gray exploded. "The only way to get across the damned bridge is to cross!"

Without thinking, meaning nothing at all, an ordinary instinctively friendly gesture really, Bryce raised a hand and grasped the bit ring of Gray's horse. At that same moment one of De Beaun's Creoles, probably tense with the waiting *they* were doing, let go a single shot.

Gray snarled, "Get your damned hand off that bridle!" At the same time he swung his horse so that the ring was jerked from Bryce's hand and snapped at the bugler, "The Charge!"

The man's short-coupled cavalry bugle came up in instantaneous reaction to the order, and the shrill call shattered the momentary stillness.

"No!" Bryce cried out even as he leaped out of the way. "For Christ's sake, Dick, wait—!"

Nobody but Gray then or ever would know what went through the man's mind at that moment. He sank spurs in his horse and was on the bridge in seconds, yards ahead of the first files behind him—

Bryce shouted, hoping he could be heard above the hammering hoofs, "Nate! Rogers! Get your men up to the bank and see if you can give them some help. On the double!"

Gray got perhaps twenty feet onto the bridge proper. Running toward the riverbank, pistol in hand, Bryce saw the whole thing. It was a cinch that the men on the opposite bank were looking straight down their rifle barrels when the bugle sounded. It seemed to Bryce, and it was highly probable, that Gray and his mount were hit at the same time. The horse stumbled and

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

went down, slithered across the bridge planking—there was no longer a rail even to break the motion—and went off into the river on the downstream side. As near as the captain could tell Gray never came out of the saddle.

The lead files had been yards behind the major but once started, and with the pressure building up behind them, they couldn't possibly stop.

Marlowe, riding outside the column, had almost reached Bryce and Gray when the bugle sounded—but not quite. Someone, seeing Marlowe reel in the saddle, cried, "Oh, Jesus! They got the Old Man—" and then the owner of the voice was swept onward.

Being outside the column, Marlowe hadn't been able to get on the bridge because it was already filled with riders. The blow—that's exactly what it felt like, caught the colonel high on the left breast. He bent backward in the saddle but instinctively clung to the reins to keep from falling. The horse, hurt sorely when the bit was yanked suddenly upward in its mouth, reared in an effort to relieve the pressure. Marlowe, when the animal reared, was thrown abruptly forward again before he could catch himself. One foot came out of the stirrup and he slid sideways along the horse's neck. Past the center of gravity and unable to recover now, he freed his other boot and slid slowly to the horse's thick mane. He staggered, still clinging to a rein, choking and unable to get his breath for a moment.

Hell was loose on the other side of the river but at the moment there was nothing Bryce could do about that.

Involuntarily the colonel's hand went to his breast, but strangely, after a few hard gasps, he began to breathe easier and his legs seemed perfectly all right—and there wasn't a drop of blood anywhere.

"Better get off your feet, Colonel," Bryce said with rough urgency. "Here, let me—"

"Just hold on a minute," Marlowe said in an odd voice. He had jerked open his tunic and Bryce could see there was a small hole in the cloth—it might have been no more than a small tear. The colonel reached for his shirt pocket and extracted the watch

HAROLD SINCLAIR

—his forefinger could feel the deep dent in the soft gold of the back. As Bryce watched in astonishment Marlowe pressed the stem release and flipped open the hunter cover on the front—smashed bits of crystal and small brass parts cascaded over his fingers and fell to the ground.

It had been a beautiful watch, of course, and anyone would hate to have it ruined, but even so Bryce was a little amazed at the look of anguish in Marlowe's face as he stared at the small wreckage in his hand. Marlowe muttered something Bryce didn't catch but he thought, He should be congratulating himself instead of fretting over a watch.

In his sudden relief Bryce said, in an attempt at humor, "Too bad it wasn't a Bible, Colonel. Then you could testify to the usual personal miracle——"

"God damn y—," Marlowe started to say. Then, "No, I'm sorry, Asa—but you'd never guess what kind of a miracle it actually was. Was that Gray on the bridge?"

"Yes," Bryce said soberly, back to the reality of the moment, "yes, it was. He seemed—oh, hell, I don't know."

. . . The melee on the far bank had been almost as short as it was ferocious. For once Marlowe had misjudged his men badly. In his mind the question had not been, Would they fight? but, Could they? They were weary beyond all description, yes, but they had come this far; it would take a great deal to keep them from going the rest of the way. For the Ninth Louisiana this was a routine operation, but for the brigade it was their only way out. They had struck De Beaun's Creoles like a small thunderbolt.

"Well," Marlowe said harshly, "whatever he thought, and did, it's done now. So now you're elected to the First. You'll take it now because there is no choice, Bryce."

The captain swung around. "No—!"

"You heard me and I shouldn't have to repeat it. As of now you're in command of the First."

"Why, hell, Colonel. Fairlie ranks me and——"

Almost unnoticed by either of them Secord had ridden up and

dismounted. "What about Fairlie?" Secord said heavily. "I didn't suppose you'd heard over here yet."

"You mean finished?" Marlowe said quickly.

Secord shook his head. "No, not yet. But he got it bad, damn it! Keller's working on him now, along with the rest, the rest of the First, I mean. Wells is taking care of my people, naturally, but Fairlie happened to be where Keller could get at him easier than Wells."

The colonel looked at Bryce and said, "Well, now, Asa?"

The captain took a deep breath and said, "Very well then—so be it, Colonel."

"Then I suggest you get across the river and get about organizing your command. We'll be moving out again as soon as things can be straightened out over there."

As he watched him go—A Company's horses had been brought up now—the colonel thought, Well, it's that kind of army—the First in command of a captain; the Second with a full colonel but without either a major or lieutenant colonel. It was the old refrain—a hell of a way to run a war; but it still held good.

As a matter of routine Bryce sent three companies of the First after the departed Rangers. Bryce didn't want to catch them, he merely wanted to make sure they didn't decide to stage another ambush, even though this one had been more or less thrust upon De Beaun.

In the meantime, for Marlowe, there was once more the problem of the casualties. He made his way to Keller's erstwhile field hospital—to give it a courtesy title.

"What, precisely, is the situation, Keller?" the colonel asked.

"We have four outright dead from the First, all of them from B Company, I think—they were right behind Major Gray," Keller said with wooden correctness. "There are two more wounded men who probably won't last out the day—"

"Would having more medical supplies make any difference?" Marlowe interrupted.

Keller shook his head. "No—it's just that they haven't quite gone over the edge yet—a matter of hours, more or less. There are four men hurt but who can still ride if they have the guts and want to get out badly enough. Two more wounded couldn't ride under any circumstances but with medical care, even without the proper drugs, they'd have a better than even chance of making it."

"Does that include Fairlie?"

"It does, Colonel."

Marlowe rubbed his forehead wearily. Not much went on in the brigade that he didn't know about in one way or another. And one of the things he knew was that Keller, regardless of his coventry since Newton, had never for a moment shirked his medical duties. They had not been great, to be sure—one broken arm, a trooper with a mashed foot that a horse had stepped on in the dark, saddle boils, the usual bowel trouble from bad water and food, but Keller, when well he might have, had never equivocated.

The colonel looked around, saw the two wooden-faced privates, in this instance Hall and Burch out of G Company, who were serving as Keller's secondary shadows. "You men are dismissed from your present duty as of now," he said wearily.

"Report to your company commander and tell him not to send any replacements."

"Yes *sir!*" they answered as though with one voice.

Keller's lips twitched a little sardonically. "Is that supposed to mean something special, Colonel?"

"As far as I'm concerned it means that as of now your status is exactly what it was when we left La Grange."

"I take it that means you're withdrawing any charges against me?"

"If you want to put it that way. Officially, of course, there never were any—or perhaps I should say formally rather than officially, if you like the distinction."

"I'm much obliged to you, Colonel."

"No," Marlowe said. He sighed faintly. "No, Major, there is

no reason to thank me. Now there's the matter of Fairlie and this other man—"

"Sergeant Francis."

"—Yes. Well, do you have any suggestions?"

"Yes, Colonel. They'll have to have professional care in order to make it at all. With your permission I'll stay and give it to them."

"You'd do that, Major?"

Keller shrugged. "Who else is there? Wells can take care of anything between here and Baton Rouge."

"If you do this," Marlowe said slowly, "you know it's a hundred to one you'll end up in a prison camp."

"I suppose so, but that would be a secondary consideration, Colonel. Medicine is where you find it. Let's leave it at that. Before you go I'd appreciate some help in having these men moved back to that plantation house we passed on the other side of the river. Whatever kind of people they are, they can hardly refuse shelter to men as badly hurt as these—I'll handle it. I would appreciate the help of at least one sound man—of course that's asking a great deal."

"Yes," Marlowe said, "it is, but I think you'll get it. Now you'd best get about your business while I get about mine."

The colonel ordered a team and wagon found and it was—he never bothered to ask how or where. But a sound man to stay behind with Keller—you could ask a man to volunteer for a risk that might make him a hero but how ask a man to volunteer for the sure hell of a Rebel prison camp? Still, he had promised Keller; he would have to try because he could do no less. It was then that Private Burch found him.

"Permission to speak to the colonel?" Burch said stiffly.

"Certainly, but do it fast!"

"I understand Major Keller is staying behind with the wounded, sir. If he stays he'll need some help. With the colonel's permission, I'd like to stay."

The colonel's manner softened imperceptibly as he said, "What's your name?"

"Private Steven Burch, sir, G Company."

"That would be Captain Bracey. Does he know about this?"

"Yes sir. I had his permission to ask you, sir."

"I see. Are you sure you know what you're letting yourself in for?"

"Yes sir, I'm sure," Burch said steadily.

The colonel looked at his open blue eyes and rather solemn face and thought, Well, if he's not he'll find out soon enough.

"Very well, Burch—and I won't forget this. Get your horse and gear and report to Major Keller immediately. And Burch—"

"Yes sir?"

"Good luck, son."

Marlowe stood beside the road near the east end of the bridge. Keller had his wagon loaded and was ready to move even as the bugles were sounding the Fall In. Marlowe said, "I'm giving you an escort as far as the house, Major, just in case. They can catch up with us."

"I doubt we'll need it, but thanks. By the way, I turned my horse over to Captain Bryce—good man there—he'll need him worse than I do now."

"I—er." For once the colonel seemed somewhat at a loss for words. "I just want to say that if it's humanly possible I'll get a party back here to you from Baton Rouge. But you know—" the colonel's voice drifted away.

Keller smiled faintly. "I know. Don't make any promises you can't keep, Colonel. I never expect miracles."

"I said *if*, sir. That's the best anybody could do."

"I guess we understand each other."

"I wonder," Marlowe said almost musingly, "I wonder. Will you shake hands, Major? I'll wish you luck."

The bugles were more urgent now—Secord and Bryce would be driving the men.

"Why not, Colonel? And luck to you."

7

The Last Long Ride

The word was that this would be the final drive for Baton Rouge. Aside from the usual breaks to water men and horses and attend the calls of nature the brigade would not stop again unless it was stopped. Later, in both time and space, and as men will, many who were there would recall the ride from Tickfaw bridge to Baton Rouge as an all-out, hell-for-leather rush for the safety of the Union lines, with the enemy practically breathing down the backs of their filthy necks—time is a mirror which has a way of distorting these things. They traveled more nearly at a crawl than a rush. Men straggled, really through little fault of their own. Animals went lame and had to be beaten and spurred cruelly. For those who made it this ride was memorable enough in itself and without embellishment.

Sometime during the late afternoon they left Mississippi for Louisiana, though no one knew exactly when—there was no “line” as such and the semitropical scenery didn’t change. Union troops held Baton Rouge firmly and had for a long time, but beyond was a sort of no-man’s land which the Federals merely patrolled for an indeterminate distance to make sure the Confederates weren’t moving in.

HAROLD SINCLAIR

This being delta country, and the first of May, the temperature rose to the mid eighties and, to men totally unaccustomed to it, the accompanying high humidity was worse than mere discomfort. Near physical exhaustion already, the heat and humidity sapped their strength still further. The dust rolled up by the shuffling hoofs powdered and coated skin, beards, uniforms, horses, equipment; it settled in every skin crack and crease and their copious sweat made these as raw as broken blisters. There was no escape for anyone. Few men prefer mud as a condition and they had suffered their share in the past two weeks, but right now a *little* mud would have been welcome. Well, having taken so much, they could take a little more.

As usual the weight on Marlowe was heavy—in his mind he carried *all* the knowledge that the others, officers included, only had piecemeal. From information gathered bit by bit, for instance, he knew that Colonel Miles's 2,400-man Louisiana Legion was—had been—at Clinton, Louisiana. Sometime this evening the brigade, on this route—and for them there was no other now—would pass through Greensburg, and Greensburg was no more than ten miles from Clinton. What did Miles know? And knowing it, what would he do? Some sixteen miles beyond Greensburg was Williams's bridge over the Amite. Every information said the Amite was unfordable and this bridge was thus the last gateway to escape. What if Miles was waiting for them at the bridge—or somewhere in between? What if some corporal's guard had already burned the bridge? What, what, what!

They plodded into Greensburg after dark and slowed only long enough, one company at a time, to water men and horses. Men were as usual detailed to make the routine inquiries—there were always people ready to talk whether they knew anything or not. But here no one knew anything about the Louisiana Legion except that there had been a lot of soldiers in and around Clinton for several days.

(The Marlowe luck was still in. On hearing of the fight at Tickfaw bridge Colonel Miles had immediately moved his Legion in that general direction, but his luck—or judgment—was

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

bad. As the brigade passed southward through Greensburg the Legion, some five miles to the north, was turning into this road over which the brigade had just come, but turning north, toward Osyka, and away from the brigade. Whatever the reason, Miles had dawdled in Clinton too long—he could have divided his forces—half of them would have been more than a match for the exhausted brigade, and covered both the Clinton and Greensburg roads. Instead, he had missed his last, best chance.)

Now after dark, from the colonel's point of view and that of the other officers as well, the worst thing was the terrible straggling. During the day the men helped each other. If you dozed and awakened to find your file man was gone you could look around and find him. But now in the dark you dozed, awakened, and found yourself riding among dark shapes you didn't recognize. As someone remarked, they were scattered all over hell and half of Louisiana. It was a good thing, Marlowe thought grimly, that they had a road to channel them or they would have been over half of Mississippi as well.

Roving up and down the line, Marlowe traveled half again as far as the others. He kept his quirt so busy that after a while the flesh of his wrist was nearly raw. He exhorted company commanders, snarled and swore at them—and wondered if it did any good at all. He was certain that by morning, in spite of all that could be done, he would have lost more men. All they could do was try to keep the number down. Men—their animals rather—staggered, slouched, limped, drifted, meandered, moved in fits and starts, singly and in bunches, in everything except regulation formation. But they moved.

"God damn it, Colonel!" a nameless company commander exploded in exasperation. "We can't carry the sonsabitches on our backs!"

"I know, but it's up to you to move 'em one way or another. Remember they're riding, not walking. Get a club and bear down on the horses. If the horse moves, the man has to."

If it was hard on the animals then the answer was that horses were more expendable than men. Men slept in every conceivable

HAROLD SINCLAIR

ble position. Some had their friends tie their ankles to the saddle cinches to keep from falling. It was a dangerous and foolish business but officers gave up trying to stop it. Some of the men would remember this as the longest night of their lives; others remembered it only in dark patches or not at all. . . . Marlowe never knew when he went to sleep, how long he slept, or what finally brought him awake again. But when he did awaken he knew instantly that he was utterly alone. The horse was cropping grass at the roadside, apparently contented and oblivious of its limp rider. Coming out of the unawareness of sleep the darkness seemed the more intense—there were stars but a reef of cloud had drifted across the moon and he experienced a wave of sheer terror that was actually physical—he could feel it in his whole body, blind, wholly unreasoning, and wholly gripping.

It is somehow assumed that a man is either brave or not brave, that this is a condition which either does or does not obtain, always and everywhere. But this is not so. Like almost everything else bravery is a relative thing—a man may defy all tigers and still flee a specific mouse. So at this time and place Colonel Jack Marlowe was afraid. In almost helpless reaction he lashed savagely at the neck of the wholly innocent animal under him, jerked its head upright, and in blind, conditioned obedience the horse shuffled off down the road.

Gradually, with the physical movement, the terrible feeling drained away and his normal faculties began to take over again. He even relaxed enough to grin mockingly at himself—he was the hard-shelled drill sergeant who, showing a recruit the manual of arms, manages to shoot himself in the foot.

Then, suddenly, he reined to a stop. The sound had been there before but only now did it reach his conscious mind. Guns! At a very considerable distance, to be sure, but certainly guns, and very heavy ones. There was no mistaking the sound once you knew it. Columbiads, or very heavy mortars. These could only mean gunboats, and gunboats could only mean the Missis-

sippi. Port Hudson? Most likely, in fact it had to be—it was now the southernmost Confederate position on the river, not far above Baton Rouge—and in the great closing movement around Vicksburg Grant would be covering every possibility. The point was, this sound should mean something to him—his tired mind told him that much but no more.

And then—great God, yes!—he had the answer: this fire came from his left. *From his left!* Asleep for he knew not how long, he had then blindly lashed the horse into motion—and now he was moving dead in the opposite direction from the brigade, back the way they had come! He could feel his body ooze sweat and the terror moved in him again, but only for a moment. He dismounted, moved over to the side of the road and then beside it for perhaps twenty yards. He felt in a pocket and found two sulphur matches—just two! He knelt at the edge of the road and, nursing the match to sputtering flame behind the shield of his hand, he almost held his breath. The flame flared, smoked, died down, then moved into steady life, and in the deep dust he could see the melange of countless overlapping hoofprints, all pointing directly opposite the direction he'd been traveling. His sigh of relief was almost a sob.

It was near the edge of dawn when he came in sight of the ghostly figures of the rear guard—rear guard in name only now. No one challenged him—no one so much as made a greeting of any kind. He might have been General Lee for all anybody cared. Those who were half-awake regarded him with about the same interest they would have shown another fence post. Those who were sound asleep in their saddles kept right on sleeping, dead men on almost dead horses.

Riding on up to find Secord, he again found Sergeant Brown looking for him. "Cap'n Bryce's compliments, sir. We're at what seems to be the Comite. We've checked it careful—no bridge of course. They'll get their asses wet but we can make it easy enough. Cap'n Bryce wants instructions."

"Then tell him just to get on with it as he sees fit, Sergeant."

The eminently correct young lieutenant wore Massachusetts insignia on his stiff clean uniform collar, his accent was pure unadulterated Back Bay, and he had behind him a patrol of some twenty men. His face, at sight of the hairy, filthy, junk-laden horsemen filling the road as far as he could see, was about evenly divided between astonishment, embarrassment, and distaste.

"I'm Lieutenant Barry, Captain—staff of General Wayne, commanding at Baton Rouge," the youth said stiffly.

Bryce grinned in appreciation. "Captain Bryce, lieutenant, commanding the First Illinois Cavalry, First Brigade, First Division, Sixteenth Army Corps." Keep the record straight, he thought. This was where order began again.

"Command—?" The lieutenant looked his well-bred unbelief. "Did you say *commanding the First Illinois?*"

"That's what I said—from La Grange, Tennessee, by way of Newton, Jackson, Hazlehurst, and God knows what points between. Our men are a little beat, Lieutenant."

"Well—" The lieutenant was looking more and more uncomfortable. "We had reports that some unauthorized force was operating in this area. My instructions are to hold you—any such force—until I can report the facts to General Wayne's headquarters."

"Well, I'll be— Did you say *hold?*"

"Er—in a manner of speaking, of course. Since we have no information of any Federal troops operating here, why, naturally we—"

"I'll tell you, Lieutenant," Bryce interrupted. "I daresay my boys would just as soon sleep here as anywhere, but I'm only in command of this regiment, not the brigade. That's Colonel John Marlowe and he very likely will have a different view. This Colonel Marlowe is a salty sonofabitch. He's brought this brigade about six hundred miles without being stopped by all the Rebels in Mississippi. He'll likely take a very dim view of being stopped here by a few feet of headquarters red tape. Nate," he

said to the sergeant, "get on down the line and tell the colonel he's wanted."

"I—well, naturally I have my orders," Barry said even more uncertainly—he couldn't recall any regulation which covered this exact situation. He had come to the deep South by way of New Orleans and General Ben Butler's occupation troops (which of course wasn't his fault) and this was the first real contact he'd had with these shaggy, irreverent Westerners.

Marlowe hadn't been far away. In fact, he had made his way forward as soon as the road began to clog up and had met Nate on the way. He listened to Barry courteously, then turned to Bryce and snapped, "How long have you been stopped here, Captain?"

"Oh, ten minutes, give or take a little."

"Then that's ten minutes too long. Now, Lieutenant, I'm not advising you, I'm telling you. The best thing you can do is to high tail it back to your headquarters and tell General Wayne we're coming in. I need camp space and first-class rations for nine hundred men and horses. Your horses are fresher than ours, Lieutenant. Even so I suggest that if you don't get the hell out of here we'll be there ahead of you, because we're moving now."

The lieutenant got out of there in a fast-moving cloud of dust.

Even so they came into the outskirts of Baton Rouge and halted. It was only common sense—after all they had no idea where they'd be going now. As a matter of routine procedure Marlowe, with Davis and King, went on ahead to General Wayne's headquarters.

Baton Rouge was no city in the New Orleans sense, but neither was it a mere country town. It had been the state capital until the Federal capture and occupation and its people had a certain Latin feeling for drama. Since they couldn't get rid of the Federal garrison it was only common sense to get along with it, and like New Orleans the place was partial to public

parades and diversions. The entry of the battered First Brigade, what was left of it, was hardly triumphal in the ordinary sense—it was both something less and more. Baton Rouge turned out en masse to watch and cheer, for these were brave men and it did not matter that for the moment they were on the other side.

The shiny-booted major in command of the honor guard saluted Bryce and Secord and said formally, "If you gentlemen are ready we'll be glad to conduct you through town to your camp grounds."

"Quite a turnout you've got there, Major," Secord said dryly. "It wouldn't have taken all that to get us through town."

"General Wayne's orders, Colonel. I—personally I'd like to say it's an honor."

It was quite a turnout for such short notice. The flags of the cavalry squadron snapped in the breeze and its horses were sleek and shining. And behind the honor guard was the crack band of the Fifty-fifth New York. Saddle sore, filthy, dead beat, their horses lame, streaked with sweat where they weren't coated with caked dust, the brigade got itself into formation of a sort. Baton Rouge never saw anything quite like it before or since. Here and there men rode with bloodstained bandages, no more than able to stay in the saddle. Here a trooper rode with one foot out of the stirrup, a boot sole flapping loosely. There was a man with one tunic sleeve ripped from shoulder to wrist.

. . . The general set out cigars, a bottle and glasses, and within five minutes became an enthusiastic audience of one. Of necessity Marlowe had to explain matters up to a point, and presently Wayne was exclaiming, "Well, by God, sir, this is simply astonishing—astonishing!" The general also had a sense of occasion, and twice he left the office to issue hurried orders of his own.

"I'm sorry, sir," Marlowe said finally. "If you'll excuse me—personally I'm at your service at any time but I owe the men their rest. God knows they've earned it. The least I can do—"

"Certainly, certainly, Colonel! I sit here jabbering as though you'd just come from a canter in the park."

As they got to their feet Marlowe swayed and staggered a half-step, steadied himself with a hand on a table top.

"Man!" Wayne exclaimed contritely and grasped Marlowe's arm. "You're half-dead and I don't wonder. Plenty of time to talk later and in the meantime I'll get telegrams off to Memphis. I can't get directly to Grant at Vicksburg but he'll hear eventually. Come along, my boy."

Still holding Marlowe's arm, the general conducted him down the corridor and out onto the broad stone steps of the building. At the edge of the street Sergeant King was still holding his, Marlowe's, horse. The general nodded to someone. The drums rolled off and the band swung into the stirring brilliant "Sword of Chapultepec."

In the street Lieutenant Rogers, now in command of A Company, barked above the brass, "Eyes left, God damn it, and the saber salute at the order!"

"Hell, General," Marlowe said a little sheepishly, "this was hardly necessary—we're not used to it."

"Nonsense, Colonel! I'm only sorry we didn't have time to do it up properly."

"Well, for the sake of the men—"

As he watched the First go by, file after file of sabers flashing in the hot sunlight, he suddenly remembered that last dew-fresh morning at La Grange, so far away and long ago, felt that same lift of the heart which had nothing to do with the larger issues of the war—and a very great but quite unselfish pride which few men are privileged to know more than once and most men not at all.

Far down the tree-bordered street the drums crashed and the band shifted into the warm, lilting melody of "Listen to the Mockingbird." The colonel's throat hurt a little and again he was having trouble seeing clearly. Dust and lack of sleep, he thought.

Epilogue

Under the orange light of the field lantern Bryce finished his letter, addressed to the Reverend Jonathan Bryce, Congregational Rectory, Dover, Illinois. He let his eyes drift over some of the lines he had just written as he relighted his dead cigar.

"—A difficult, in a way foolish operation, but it was carried out with remarkable success, as success in these things is measured. There was, to be sure, a fantastic amount of luck involved, otherwise this would be written, if at all, from some Rebel prison camp . . . but above all there was the brigade commander, the Colonel Marlowe I have written you so much about. It is now, however, and properly, Brigadier General Marlowe, though I think that is a matter of no moment to him . . . if they had given him an army corps the Union cause would be that much better served . . . We have been told, by people who set store by such matters, that ours was the longest military march within a given time on record, and this to say nothing of what we accomplished on the way . . . to keep the record straight I should tell you that my proper title is now lieutenant colonel . . . more responsibility, naturally . . . always so in a regiment of cavalry, for unlike men, horses, valua-

THE HORSE SOLDIERS

ble as property, can't be dismissed and left to shift for themselves . . . had refused the promotion before but accepted it now through force of circumstances. I find it difficult to explain—"

A shadow fell across the corner of the table and a slightly drunken voice, a cautious mixture of jocularly and due respect, said, "Am I interruptin' anything, Major?"

Ninety per cent of the brigade, particularly the enlisted men, had not a cent in their pockets when they arrived in Baton Rouge. But in their first flush of enthusiasm the Creole tavern-keepers had been lavish with both hospitality and credit. And wisely, that first Saturday night and Sunday after their arrival, the provost looked the other way.

"Not a thing, Nate," Bryce said. "I'm all through. Come on in."

Sergeant Brown looked curiously around at the inside of the tent, though it was precisely like ten thousand others.

"I take it this is now official regimental headquarters of the First," Nate said with monumental gravity.

"Well, temporarily at least, though frankly I hadn't given it much thought, Nate."

"Un-hunh. Well, naturally I been uptown speculatin' around but I heard the word. I reckon congratulations are in order—Major."

"If you feel that way, then thanks, Nate. But—as long as we're on the subject we might as well keep the record straight—it's lieutenant colonel, not major."

"The hell you—er, well—uh, congratulations anyway."

Bryce chuckled. "All right—I get the point."

Nate said, "You know, Cap'n, you an' me have soldiered a long ways together—" He hesitated.

"A long ways, Nate," Bryce agreed. He hadn't missed that deliberate "Cap'n." He knew from wide experience that Nate wasn't that drunk.

"Un-hunh. Well, from now on we won't be seein' each other quite so much, I reckon—"

"Oh, I don't know." Bryce intended to make Nate his per-

sonal orderly, but decided now was not the time to bring up the subject.

"Well, I know, Cap'n," Nate said owlshly. "So while I'm drunk enough I want to tell you this story—I probably won't have a chance again. No offense, nothin' personal, you understand? Well, anyhow, it seems like this fellow's uncle died an' left him a barrel o' money, and all his friends said, 'Y'know, inheritin' all that money ain't gone to ol' George's head a bit—he's the same no-good sonofabitch he always was!'"

Bryce's laughter bubbled and choked around his cigar until he took it from his teeth. He started to say something, then stopped when their ears caught the first faint, faraway notes of Tattoo, the preliminary to the Lights Out to follow. It was a call almost never used by the buglers of the First Brigade, nor had they played a Taps since the night before they rode out of La Grange. But here in Baton Rouge General Wayne was running a spit-and-polish garrison post and they had all the trimmings. Now, as soldiers will, they waited and listened, each lost for the moment in his own thoughts, until the last long trumpet note died away.

WHAT A YEAR!

BY JOE ALEX MORRIS

The colorful story of **1929**
—one of the truly pivotal
years in American history.



AN ABRIDGEMENT

The Author

JOE ALEX MORRIS went to New York in 1928 to join the staff of the United Press, and as its Foreign Editor spent time before and during World War II in Europe as well as in New York. From 1944 until he became managing editor of *Collier's* Mr. Morris was Foreign Editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*. He has collaborated with Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr., in editing *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg* and with Ira R. T. Smith on *Dear Mr. President*. In 1952 Mr. Morris' *Those Rockefeller Brothers* was published. He and his wife live on a farm in Connecticut; they have a son, now a newspaperman in Germany, a daughter and two grandchildren.

WHAT A YEAR!—Joe Alex Morris
Published by Harper and Brothers
Copyright © 1956 by Joe Alex Morris

foreword

This book concerns a year that has come to be regarded as a kind of dividing line in the history of the United States and, for that matter, of a considerable part of the world. It was a year of contrasts—of high achievement and dazzling hopes, of great folly and irresponsibility, of humiliating failure and the smell of fear. But it was more than all that: it was a year of transition. It led out of the roaring, raucous, hell-raising, materialistic and individualistic postwar period and pointed toward an era of tremendous social change. People later would speak of “before 1929” or “after 1929” as Noah’s children may have spoken of the days before and after The Flood.

Actually, for Americans busy trying to make a living at the time, the transition wasn’t so sudden or so clearly defined as it would later seem, in retrospect, to have been. But it was rapid enough and, in the end, it was far-reaching. This book tries to show some of the ways in which we have changed and some of the ways in which we have not changed since 1929. Youngsters who have grown up on easy terms with guided missiles and space ships during the first decade of the Atomic Age may be amused at the crude machines we regarded as mechanical marvels only a little over a quarter-century ago. Oldsters may be reminded of long-forgotten events and say, well, yes—but that isn’t exactly the way they remembered it. Nineteen twenty-nine happened to a lot of people in a lot of different ways, but everybody remembers that it happened.

The events related in this book occurred, for the most part, in the eleventh year after World War I. This manuscript was completed on the eve of the eleventh year after World War II.

J.A.M.

the bootleg days

The skies were clear over Chicago and there was almost a touch of springtime warmth in the sun on the morning of February 14, 1929. Grade school kids skipped along North Clark Street, clutching valentines made of bits of colored paper and laboriously addressed to special friends. When they had gone, the street settled down into a slovenly routine. A few housewives hurried along toward the corner store. Automobiles occasionally bumped down the street. A big truck slowed down and turned into the S. M. C. Cartage Company garage.

The atmosphere was even lazier inside the garage. Two men sat idly in the front office, a dusty room in which no office work obviously had been done for months. Four other men in the main part of the garage were drinking coffee from heavy mugs. The driver of the truck, in which was concealed a beer vat, pulled on a pair of overalls and began tinkering with his machine. This, at 10:20 A.M., on St. Valentine's Day, was a bootlegging depot of one of the most powerful citizens of Chicago, George (Bugs) Moran, and a few of Moran's employees were standing by to handle an expected cargo of booze.

The Moran mob had been riding high for some months. Given time, Moran might even bring the gang back to the power it had known when it was the O'Banion mob. Dion O'Banion, unfortunately, had been shot to death amid a display of hyacinths and gardenias in his florist shop by three friends who had sold out to O'Banion's chief rival, Scarface Al Capone, the most notorious of modern hoodlums.

At 10:30 A.M. on St. Valentine's Day, the S. M. C. Cartage Company ceased to be a bootlegging depot. A dark blue automobile of the type used by police slid to a stop in front of the door and five men, three of them wearing police uniforms, got out carrying submachine guns—known to gangsters as “type-

writers"—and shotguns. This caused no great excitement in the garage because raids were commonplace and cops could be bribed. The newcomers motioned the two idlers in the "office" toward the main part of the garage with the four coffee drinkers and the truck driver; then ordered all seven to line up facing the north wall of whitewashed brick. Suddenly, there was terror in the garage; there was something wrong about these cops. James Clark, Moran's brother-in-law and first lieutenant, looked at them closely as he moved over to the brick wall with a gun barrel poking him in the back.

"Put your noses against that wall."

Clark sputtered: "Say, what is this, a . . ."

"Okay. Let 'em have it!"

A roar echoed hollowly in the big garage and seven men crumpled in front of the red-splashed wall. Approximately a hundred bullets had been about evenly divided among them. When the real police arrived at the garage a bit later, the only living things they found were a big police dog plunging on its leash and a boy named Frank Gusenberg who had twenty bullets in his body and didn't say much before he died a few hours later.

By 1929 violence had become an almost daily occurrence in the multibillion-dollar bootlegging industry and sudden death was not uncommon either for dealers in illicit alcohol or for their customers. In nine years, prohibition enforcement agents had spent two hundred thousand dollars and had killed 159 persons "in self defense," according to the official record, to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment. They had also killed not a few bystanders by accident or mistake. Bad liquor had killed no less than 1,565 consumers in the past year. The bootlegging wars had killed many others, but nobody knew just how many because quite a few victims had been encased in cement and dropped into the ocean by rival mobsters.

Summed up in a few sentences, such statistics give the impression that the United States in 1929 was a land terrorized by

brutal thugs and by hardly less civilized government officers who roamed the countryside in fast automobiles and raced along the coasts in powerful speedboats, usually shooting wildly at each other and anybody who happened to get in the way.

This was a distorted impression. The American scene was not lacking in serious blemishes, but by 1929 the people generally had made certain necessary adjustments to life under the Eighteenth Amendment. Saloons were operating quietly and almost openly in some cities, liquor was sold freely in night clubs and speakeasy restaurants, distilleries ran day and night with only slight efforts at disguise and railroads transported huge cargoes of liquor and beer labeled as olive oil or heavy machinery. The ordinary citizen's only contact with the violence behind the façade of this vast, illicit industry was a bootlegger's telephone number and the newspaper accounts of raids, killings and corruption.

Anybody who wanted a drink could get it without serious risk, except in a few states. The federal law applied to the manufacturer, seller or smuggler but not to the buyer of liquor; and prohibition was merely an inconvenience to most American drinkers. And unhappily, the fact that there was a law against intoxicants seemed to cause a considerable proportion of the population to regard it as their duty to get themselves "crooked" at regular intervals. It was "the thing to do" and the result was often violent nausea, millions of Sunday morning hangovers and irreparable damage to hundreds of thousands of stomachs.

For those Americans who did not concoct their own brews at home there were plenty of places—known as speakeasies, gin mills, whoopee parlors and even by the old-fashioned name of blind pigs—where a drink could be purchased across the bar or from under the counter.

Speakeasies varied from holes-in-the-wall where for a dime you could buy a shot of "smoke"—usually dangerous alcohol

—to beer joints hidden behind stationery stores and to plush restaurants off Park Avenue hidden behind costly political protection.

There also were countless restaurants where the food was good and moderately priced—perhaps a dollar and a half for a good Italian meal—and where you could get a cocktail served in a teacup for seventy-five cents and a bottle of wine for another dollar. Many speakeasy-restaurants operated more or less openly in the cities, although they might refuse to serve liquor to customers they suspected as informers.

All of these illicit businesses—the dives, the farmhouses where wine was sold in the kitchen, the false-front saloons, the good and the mediocre restaurants that served liquor—were seemingly a permanent part of the American scene in 1929, but the finest flowers of the Prohibition Era were the night club and the clip joint.

A little experience helped drinkers in distinguishing between night clubs and clip joints. In 1929, two young newspapermen who had just arrived in New York from Colorado collected their Friday afternoon pay checks and set out to find a drink. A taxicab driver took them to a Greenwich Village club with a peephole in the door and told them to inform the doorman that "Sam sent us." They were admitted to a bar where they sat at a table and were promptly joined by two unattached young women. Everybody had a few drinks and, a couple of hours later, a large, exceedingly tough-looking waiter put on the table a bill that totaled more than the reporters' combined pay checks. At the same time two more tough characters took up stations near the table. Hiding their terror, the reporters ordered two more drinks and one of them went to the washroom, where he telephoned his office and explained his plight to an assistant city editor. "Just sit tight at that table and have another drink," he was advised. Twenty minutes later the doorman admitted a uniform policeman who looked around and barked: "I'm looking for a couple of crooks named Smith and Jones. You there! What's your names?" The reporters admitted to the

names. "Okay, you two," the cop growled. "You're wanted at the station. Come along." They went as rapidly as possible, leaving the check on the table. Outside, the cop marched them to the corner and told them to head for home. "Good thing your boss is a friend of the lieutenant," he said. "Otherwise you'd got hell beat out of you. What kind a reporters are you anyway—too dumb to know when you're in a clip joint?"

The night club, on the other hand, was a spot where the clipping of the sheep was carried on in a more subtle manner. Customers happily handed out big tips and paid a dollar or more for a thimbleful of bootleg bourbon in order to sit uncomfortably at crowded tables and hear Broadway's melancholy Helen Morgan, perched atop a piano, singing:

Some day he'll come along,
The man I love. . . .

Perhaps the best-known if not the most elegant of the New York night clubs were connected with the name of Mary Louise Guinan, a broad and brassy blonde from Waco, Texas, with a penetrating voice and a gift for mixing politicians, society figures, gamblers, gunmen and businessmen from the Midwest. Miss Guinan, usually known as Texas, was sponsored by notorious gangsters, protected by well-known politicians and admired by many of the less conservative members of New York society, who followed her from one to another of half a dozen different night clubs during the late 1920's.

A typical Texas Guinan Club was a big, rather barren room filled with small tables and a bandstand adjacent to a dance floor hardly larger than a billiard table. The smoke was thick, the music was loud and the pony chorus of girls—young, pretty and lightly clad—had so little room in which to maneuver that they were practically in the laps of ringside customers. Miss Guinan, once a singer of sorts, wore glittering sequin-covered gowns and often blew a police whistle in her role as mistress of ceremonies and greeter of customers. She approached both jobs with such remarkable candor that several of her more

penetrating remarks have been preserved for posterity. "Hello, sucker!" was her familiar greeting. And her technique in introducing a performer was to demand: "Give this little girl a great big hand, folks!"—a command that later generations of night clubbers and radio listeners would hear to the point of nausea.

When Chester P. Mills was prohibition administrator for New York, he made many attempts to secure evidence of violation of the Volstead Act that would put Miss Guinan in jail. Her clubs frequently were raided and sometimes closed but she always contended in court that she was merely a hired entertainer who had no idea that liquor was being served. The government was never able to prove otherwise to a jury.

One of Miss Guinan's trials in April of 1929 was played to standing room only. Crowds jammed the corridors of the Federal Building and let out a roar of approval when the verdict of "not guilty" was announced. That night, clad in a bright red dress, she entered her club behind a brass band and was given a standing ovation by the customers. "She kissed everybody in sight," *Time* magazine recorded.

Despite the fact that the prohibitionists had scored a great victory in the 1928 presidential and congressional elections, public concern about prohibition in general and public resentment against many dry agents in particular were being increased every day. There had been criminals and crime, racketeers and rackets long before the Prohibition Era. Nobody could blame the dries for having invented gangsterism or political corruption. But prohibition had made it possible for crime to pay as never before in modern times; it had created a climate in which the gunman and the rum runner were romantic, adventurous figures.

Even more disastrous, it had led millions of Americans to break the law or to sympathize with lawbreakers because they regarded the Eighteenth Amendment as an infringement on their rights—and because they wanted a drink. Crowds that witnessed raids on speakeasies often threatened or interfered

JOE ALEX MORRIS

with prohibition agents and on some occasions created so much confusion that bystanders were able to make off with bottles or even barrels of liquor that had been—temporarily—confiscated.

The public was often incensed by the tactics of the dry agents. At one time, agents stood at the gangplank of ocean liners and patted passengers, including some women, on the hips or legs as they came ashore to see whether they were carrying liquor flasks. In Kane County, Illinois, four deputy sheriffs acting on the tip of a snooper who was paid five dollars, broke into the home of Joseph De King in Aurora after throwing mustard bombs at the windows. De King was knocked unconscious. Mrs. De King was at the telephone screaming for help when a deputy fired a shotgun loaded with slugs, wounding her fatally. The De Kings' twelve-year-old son shot a deputy in the leg with a revolver but was overpowered. One gallon of home-made wine was found in the cellar. In Minnesota, Henry Virkula was returning to his candy store at Big Falls after a trip across the Canadian border when two men leaped into the road with a big "Stop" sign. Virkula braked but the car didn't stop until it had passed the two customs agents, one of whom shot the candy store owner in the back of the neck, killing him. No liquor was found in the car.

Because of such incidents a great many thinking people were worried or alarmed by conditions in the ninth year of the prohibition era. In the nation's wettest city, for example, Mayor James J. Walker had a few words to say about conditions that had come to his attention. The honest workers of New York going to their jobs at dawn, he said, often encountered tipsy revelers in evening clothes staggering away from night clubs. This, Mr. Walker remarked indignantly, was likely to give the workers a bad impression of society and might open the road to Bolshevism. To correct this grave situation, the New York Mayor added, he believed that the tipsy revelers should go home at 3 A.M.

the political scene

Low, rain-filled clouds hung over the capital of the United States at midday on March 4 when two men wearing silk top hats, cutaway coats and gray pin-stripe trousers climbed into an automobile at the White House and started a solemn drive down Pennsylvania Avenue. Except for the fact that inauguration of a new Chief of State required a ceremonial trip to the capitol, neither President Calvin Coolidge nor President-elect Herbert Clark Hoover would have chosen to motor along Pennsylvania Avenue. Nor would anybody else. It was a drab street, pockmarked with old and grimy buildings—grocery stores, cheap hotels, an old market, souvenir shops, a burlesque theater, lunchrooms, a Chinese laundry, a fortunetellers' establishment, a gasoline station and the building in which the Leong Tong made its headquarters.

Almost the only encouraging sights that greeted Mr. Coolidge and Mr. Hoover that March morning were the partly completed Department of Commerce Building—massive walls stretching a thousand feet along Fourteenth Street—and slabs of New England granite, Tennessee marble and Indiana limestone piled up on the Mall in preparation for construction of the six-million-dollar Bureau of Internal Revenue Building. These were the first steps in an ambitious, \$275-million program of construction.

But on the dreary March day in 1929 this work had hardly started and the only impressive thing about Pennsylvania Avenue was the throng that cheered the retiring and incoming Presidents and a fat, strong-voiced boy at the corner of Tenth Street who cried: "Oh, you Herbie!" as Mr. Hoover sedately lifted his silk topper in greeting. Mr. Coolidge, the crowd noted,

JOE ALEX MORRIS

doffed his hat oftener and more gaily than his successor, and perhaps with good reason.

As President, Mr. Hoover presided honestly, efficiently and energetically over the affairs of a government that was rather blindly near the end of an era of unfettered freedom for private enterprise. By modern standards, it was not a very big governmental operation. When Mr. Hoover took office there were less than 600,000 federal employees or about one-fourth as many as would be on the payroll in 1954. There were about 215,000 men in the Army and Navy combined and the lowest pay for a private was twenty-four dollars a month, but by 1954 (after the Korean War) the number of men and women in the two services would be more than ten times as great and the lowest basic pay would be more than three times as high. The United States Air Force didn't even exist as a separate service in 1929, but a quarter-century later it would have a strength of approximately a million men and women. Thus in a period of twenty-five years the peacetime armed forces of the nation were increased fifteenfold.

What such changes in government—especially the growth of defense spending—meant to the average American is best illustrated by the change in income tax rates over approximately the same period. In 1929, the rate of normal tax on the first \$7,500 of net income was 1½ per cent, with exemptions of \$1,500 for a single person and \$3,500 for a married person or the head of a family. For those in the higher brackets, the rate mounted to 5 per cent at \$12,000 plus a surtax that was graduated up to 20 per cent on \$100,000. Thus a married man earning \$7,500 a year in 1929 could not possibly pay more than \$60 in income tax and, after making authorized deductions, probably would pay considerably less or nothing at all. The man with an income of \$100,000 might, but probably would not, pay up to \$16,000.

By the 1950's there had been some changes made. The exemptions had been cut by more than 60 per cent to a flat \$600

per taxpayer plus the same amount for each dependent. The tax rate, including surtax, for practically all wage earners was just above 20 per cent or about fourteen times the rate on modest incomes in 1929, and the surtax rate had been boosted to 87 per cent in the upper brackets. If deductions other than for himself and his wife were disregarded, the married man with a salary of \$7,500 in 1954 could theoretically pay a maximum tax about twenty-eight times as large as his maximum payment of \$60 on the same salary in 1929; and the man with an income of \$100,000 might find his taxes quadrupled to more than \$67,000.

Mr. Hoover managed to run the government in 1929 on less than four billion dollars and his tax collectors managed to bring in a little more than four billion. The national debt was whittled down that year to less than seventeen billion dollars. A quarter-century later the Department of Defense alone would be spending ten times as much annually as the entire government budget for 1929, and over-all government expenditures would be in the neighborhood of seventy billion dollars. So vast was the growth of government expense in this period that by 1954 the national debt would be increased sixteenfold to \$275 billion and the budgetary *deficit* would be about as large as the *entire budget* for Mr. Hoover's first year in office. In the same period the per capita cost of government to Americans increased fourteenfold to about \$440 a year.

But such statistics give only the vaguest idea of the change in government from a physical as well as a philosophical viewpoint. In 1929, there was no Social Security Administration, no Tennessee Valley Authority, no National Labor Relations Board, no Securities and Exchange Commission, no Rural Electrification Administration, no Atomic Energy Commission—to mention just a few. Nor was there a "cold war" to keep world powers in a state of nervous emergency.

A man of high ideals and with deep sympathy for humanity, Mr. Hoover realized perhaps better than anyone else that 1929

was a time of change and that there were great opportunities for his administration to point the way toward a brighter, stronger America. He had his head and not a few filing cases full of plans for all kinds of improvements in such varied fields as agriculture, flood control, elimination of waste in manufacture and distribution, child welfare, stimulation of home construction, banking practices, the rights of labor and economic planning toward the abolition of poverty. He believed that these and many other forward steps could be achieved not by government compulsion but by free and voluntary co-operation.

Unfortunately, the President's engineering blueprints failed to make allowance for the stress and strain of politics. Not only was Mr. Hoover an inept politician but he believed that it was beneath the dignity of the President to fight back in the rough-and-tumble political style of the day. And to add to his difficulties, his lieutenants in Congress with few exceptions were particularly weak and his luck was generally bad.

Mr. Hoover had been elected by a landslide in which he carried forty states and received 444 of 531 electoral votes. Republican governors had been elected in twenty-eight states and Democratic governors in only five. Yet the President was never able to make really effective use of this great political power. His prestige was with the people rather than the party politicians.

The hottest and longest congressional controversy of 1929 revolved around tariff revision. Tariff legislation always cuts across party lines because an increase in duties to protect the product of one part of the country from foreign competition usually means that other parts of the country will have to pay higher prices for that product. Mr. Hoover originally had asked for limited changes favoring the depressed farming areas. The legislation was introduced by two Westerners, Senator Reed Smoot of Utah, and Representative Willis C. Hawley of Oregon, but by the time it had been worked over and revised in secret committee sessions many observers remarked that it seemed to

bear the heavy imprint of Joseph R. Grundy, president of the Pennsylvania Manufacturers Association and a potent lobbyist for Eastern industrialists. Midwestern congressmen began to mutter that instead of aiding the farmers by raising duties on agricultural products, the bill primarily aided the manufacturers by raising the prices that farmers had to pay for almost everything they needed.

This development—coming on the heels of discontent over the farm relief program—was an opportunity too good for the Democrats to miss. In the House, Minority Leader Garner bitterly denounced Speaker Longworth's dictatorial methods in rushing enactment of the bill under the familiar "gag" rule.

The Democrats were given aid and comfort by a group of Midwestern and Western Republican senators who opposed the bill or parts of it. Senator Borah of Idaho, denouncing the higher protectionist rates for industry, pointed out that the United States Steel Company earnings were the highest in the history of the company, that Bethlehem Steel had a gain of 160 per cent in earnings the first six months of 1929, that Republic Iron and Steel Company showed increased earnings of 208 per cent and Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company earnings increased 145 per cent. Senator Norris of Nebraska revived the farm relief Export Debenture Plan as an amendment to the tariff bill and it was approved, 42 to 34, despite the frantic opposition of the Republican leadership. Senator Watson, floundering as Majority Leader, made a radio appeal to the public to have faith in the administration's determination to enact a fair and equitable tariff measure and then departed, exhausted, for a rest in Florida on his doctor's orders.

The tariff legislation was now in a hopeless muddle—no bill would be passed until 1930—but the Democrats had made a pretty good crop of political hay at a time when the administration should have been reaping the fruits of the 1928 Hoover landslide. It is generally accepted that the political debacle that overtook the Republicans during the Hoover administration stemmed from the Wall Street crash in late October, and no

JOE ALEX MORRIS

doubt that is historically correct. But throughout the summer of 1929 when the Stock Exchange quotations rose higher every day the seeds of discontent were being planted as the Democrats took up the role of friend of the farmer and belabored the administration as the "friend of big business." Even the staunchly Republican New York *Herald Tribune* was moved later in the year to say uneasily that "it should be realized that the Republican party is fundamentally the party uniting the western farmer with the eastern industrialist. This primary function seems to have been forgotten and in the interest of the party it should be revived." And the *New York Times* added that the manufacturers got about what they wanted from Congress but "the farmers got nothing. The western Republicans feel that they were treated as poor relations." Even when, late in the year, the administration cut taxes by \$160 million the Democrats were quick to claim that it was mainly for benefit of large corporations, which received \$100 million of the reduction. The Democratic line that would eventually flower into biting attacks on "the economic royalists" was beginning to take shape and the Republican party's long and comfortable grip on the voters of the great American Middle West would not be the same again for two decades.

The extent to which the Democratic attacks and the maneuvers of Republican insurgents in Congress damaged Mr. Hoover's leadership—if it was damaged—is not easy to estimate because of still greater woes that were to befall his administration. But the *New York Times*, perhaps more hopefully than confidently, did not take a discouraging view of the situation in which the President found himself. Politicians who had once sneered at Mr. Hoover's lack of adroitness, it said, do so no longer because he has "become a fairly good politician."

It is possible that the Senate as a whole may instinctively feel a certain opposition to him [the *Times* said]. This is partly on account of his personality, partly on account of his methods. He represents promptness and energy and efficiency. . . . The Sen-

ate moves very slowly, wastes a lot of time and would rather debate than act. . . . A certain amount of dislike and even friction is sure to result. . . . But no senator is "out" for the President's scalp. Thus far he has never been attacked in the Senate so fiercely as were most of his predecessors in the Presidency.

It is possible, of course, that Mr. Hoover would have been able to gain control of the political situation and assert his leadership if there had been no economic collapse. But, in retrospect, the *Times* editorial seems unduly optimistic and fails to take into consideration the chaotic divisions within the Republican party, especially in the Senate, at a time when business was booming to unprecedented levels.

The Old Guard Republican senators, such as Watson, George Moses of New Hampshire and David A. Reed of Pennsylvania, were fighting grimly to maintain their control of the party machinery, but they were harassed more and more vigorously by the insurgent or so-called Progressive Republicans such as Borah, Norris and Gerald Nye of South Dakota. Nor could they always be sure that Mr. Hoover would be in their corner on political matters. In New Jersey, the regular Republican organization wanted former Senator Joseph S. Frelinghuysen appointed to the Senate seat left vacant when Walter E. Edge became Ambassador to France. But the President wanted Dwight W. Morrow, who had served ably as Ambassador to Mexico, and it was Morrow whom the Governor of New Jersey appointed.

In Pennsylvania, William S. Vare was accused of having stolen the senatorial election by spending almost eight hundred thousand dollars to win the Republican nomination. Republican insurgents joined Senate Democrats in voting 58 to 22 to refuse to seat him. Senator Nye then further angered the Old Guard by publicly warning Governor John S. Fisher of Pennsylvania against filling the vacant seat by appointing anyone connected with "the Mellon-Grundy-Fisher machine. . . . We cannot damn one ill-smelling Pennsylvania machine without damning the other." Fisher had little choice but to defy his critics and he

promptly appointed Lobbyist Grundy to represent Pennsylvania in the Senate. The appointment stuck, too, although Grundy had to sit, rosy-cheeked and smiling, on the Senate Floor for three hours while his appointment was denounced as "corrupt" and "an insult to decency." "I feel," he said later, "like a cat in a strange garret."

Such battles and recriminations racked the Republican party and whatever Mr. Hoover may have done or tried to do to restore harmony or to get even a working agreement was not obvious to the public.

In the course of the summer, Borah, Brookhart and Senator Lynn J. Frazier of North Dakota—all former Hoover enthusiasts—broke openly with the administration. Freshman Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan disrupted the party leaders' plans by forcing through a measure for congressional reapportionment that was particularly obnoxious to some of the Southern states. The President "fired" Dr. Hubert Work, who had done about as much as anybody to get him nominated in 1928, from the Republican National Committee. The reasons for this break were never very clear, but Claudius H. Huston of Chattanooga, Tennessee, was then named National Chairman in line with Mr. Hoover's hope of building up the party in the Southern states.

At a strategy dinner of Republican leaders in New York, James Francis Burke, counsel of the National Committee, stirred up trouble anew by calling the Senate insurgents "pigmies and obstructionists, who should not be re-elected." At the same meeting it was announced by Senator Moses that Otto H. Kahn, international banker, had agreed to act as treasurer of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee for the 1930 election. This appointment caused such wild glee among the Democrats and such anger among the Republican Progressives that Kahn declined to serve, but Moses was still good for one more blunder. A few days later, angered by collapse of the tariff legislation, he told a meeting of New England manufacturers that the Republican insurgents in the Senate were

"sons of the wild jackasses." And to this Reed of Pennsylvania, added that they were "worse than Communists."

For months thereafter the "sons of the wild jackasses" harried the Old Guard leaders bitterly and enthusiastically. And they were joined by still another group of Republicans, known as the Young Turks—about a score of junior members who had decided it was time to get rid of the Watson-Moses leadership and install a more enlightened directorate. By the end of the year, a large chunk of the Republican victory of 1928 had been dissipated by intraparty feuding, by depressed farm prices and by the Democrats' able political exploitation of these difficulties. If the farmers—conservatives in most respects—had not lost confidence in Mr. Hoover's conservative engineering approach to the problems of government, they had at least begun to wonder whether their own difficulties called for some more drastic solution. It would not be long before wonder turned to conviction, opening the way not just for Democratic victory in the 1930 congressional elections but for a decade of intense sociopolitical upheaval that would erase permanently many of the Old Guard's cherished concepts of the role of government in a democracy.

"The old parties have continued to mouth the old phrases and flaunt the old slogans," remarked Philosopher John Dewey of Columbia University, on his seventieth birthday in October of 1929. "But behind the scenes they have surrendered abjectly to Big Business interests and become their errand boys." Professor Dewey proposed to found a new league for independent political action. This was doubtless a constructive idea, but too late. They didn't know it yet, but time had just about caught up with "the errand boys."

the human comedy

There is a natural tendency on the part of historians and others to attach a special name to any decade that marks a drastic change in our way of life, that stands out as a period to be remembered either with a little shudder of horror or with a wistful smile of happiness. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Gay Nineties were a welcome change from the stern mood of Victorianism and the very words evoke a picture of elaborately dressed and carefree women, of gallant gentlemen wearing top hats and sideburns, of glistening carriages and lively champagne parties, of laughter and the click of croquet balls on the lawn. It is, in retrospect, a happy picture that leaves no room for the humdrum life of the 1890's, the sweatshops, the saloon brawls, the outdoor privies, the coal-dust-covered trains, the twelve-hour working day and the muddy streets that were considerably more familiar to most Americans than top hats or champagne. We insist upon thinking of the 1890's as a gay and gallant decade. They were a time of change; a reference point in history.

So were the Roaring Twenties. Not everybody, of course, was roaring any more than everybody was gay in the Gay Nineties. But the Twenties were full of action and robust growth and excitement and a tendency to carry everything to extremes. The First World War had been fought in a spirit of high idealism to "make the world safe for democracy." It was followed by a period of deep disillusionment because the world wasn't remade overnight in a better mold. But youthful America made a determined, reckless break with the past. The result was the Emancipation of Women, the Jazz Age, Flaming Youth, Flappers, the Golden Era of Sports, the Glamorization of Gangsters, the Red Hot Baby in Short Skirts, the Big

Nonstop Business Boom, "Yes, We Have No Bananas," Necking in Automobiles, Marathon Dances, the Greenwich Village Art Movement, the Miracle of Radio and the Great Emphasis on Sex.

Certain reservations should be made about 1929, especially in regard to Sex. There had been a far-reaching revolution in morals and manners and some of the changes that had occurred were here to stay. For instance, women were not going to give up their hard-earned place in business and public affairs. On the other hand, some of the steam had gone out of the revolt against the old ways. Perhaps a pinch of salt should have been prescribed to go with H. L. Mencken's remark that "more women are self-supporting and independent than ever before and more women, I suspect, wish they were dead." But there is not much doubt that the new morality and the new sex freedom were more talked about than practiced. As one writer of the day pointed out, the whole subject of sexual promiscuity had been confused by "a liberal share of buncome" that had been printed in the newspapers and magazines. And in 1929 there were signs that a reaction had set in; that soon the loud and persistent talk about freedom of the sexes would be just a little old-fashioned.

Yet this trend was no more than a ripple on the surface as the Twenties roared toward their climax. Money was easy to make—on paper—and excitement was easy to find. It was a day of extravagant promotion, of zany fads, of mixed social values and free spending. It was, Westbrook Pegler noted, An Era of Wonderful Nonsense. Anything, they said, could happen, and usually did.

One of the things that happened at the end of the Roaring Twenties was a speed-up of all forms of communication. Better automobiles, better roads, airplanes, radio and wireless transmission of photographs had become a part of the post-war mass production civilization of the United States. Distances were shortened. People who had spent half a lifetime

JOE ALEX MORRIS

within a fifty-mile radius of their birthplaces in Midwestern towns now thought little of dashing halfway across the continent to New York on a business trip or of driving two thousand miles through the Rocky Mountains on a vacation. Flights across the Atlantic Ocean were becoming so common that twenty-two-year-old Arthur Schreiber was able to "stowaway" on the French monoplane *Yellow Bird*, which took off from Old Orchard Beach, Maine, for Paris. Due to headwinds and the extra weight of the stowaway, the *Yellow Bird* was forced to land in Spain. What happened in London or Bombay or Tokyo in the morning was known and discussed at dinner time in Ottumwa, Iowa. The latest fashions and the latest slang from Paris or Broadway or Hollywood no longer required months or years to seep into the hills of Kentucky but were communicated in hours or days by newspapers, radio and the movies.

Not all Americans, of course, were interested in the idea of getting some place in a hurry; a great many were concerned about spiritual values, although they frequently seemed to be all but submerged in the frantic swirl of 1929. For a while in the mid-Twenties it had seemed that the country's jangled nerves might be soothed by a little French psychotherapist, Emil Coué, who attracted tremendous crowds and had practically everyone saying: "Day by day in every way I am getting better and better." But interest in the latest stock market tip or in the new automobile models soon overcame interest in Couéism.

There were many signs of the times that disturbed religious leaders in America. Church attendance was at a low ebb. Ministers spoke bitterly of men and women who chased golf balls on Sunday morning. Some members of the clergy made a valiant effort to bring their churches "up to date" and to attract larger congregations by employment of modern publicity methods. In Herrin, Illinois, a "railway sermon" was delivered at the First Methodist Episcopal Church by the Rev. Frank W. Pimlott, whose father had been an engineer. The ushers carried lanterns. A male quartet sang "Life's Railway to Heaven."

WHAT A YEAR!

The pastor called "All aboard!" and the orchestra imitated a railroad train—the exhaust was heard, the bell rang and the whistle blew. As the train speeded up the congregation sang "I'm Bound for the Promised Land." Far to the west, a men's Bible class in Hollywood heard a series of lectures by W. W. Bustard, an "experienced athlete," on the following subjects:

Samson—The World's Strong Man

Jacob—The Great Wrestler

Enoch—The Long Distance Walker

David—The Pinch Hitter

Saul—The Man Who Fumbled the Ball

Jesus—The World Champion

Even with an up-to-date public relations approach, the churches of America had a hard time in 1929 competing with the country clubs and the stock market. "Wall Street, to multitudes, as well as to the custodians of the shrine, was a Holy of Holies," wrote Halford E. Luccock in *American Mirror*. And William Allen White added: "What a sordid decade is passing! . . . The spirit of our democracy has turned away from the things of the spirit, got its share of its patrimony ruthlessly, and has gone out and lived riotously and ended up by feeding it to the swine. . . . We sit in our offices and do unimportant things and go home at night and think humdrum thoughts. . . ."

People with money were not much concerned with whether the country was going to the dogs in 1929 or at least there were few evidences of concern in those spots where the free spenders were most in evidence. The year 1929 was a kind of turning point for the famous resorts which had long been populated at various seasons each year by America's society families. Not that the wealthy families were going broke in many cases. On the contrary, tax records that year showed 513 Americans with incomes above a million dollars and a dozen with incomes of more than five million a year. George F. Baker, the stern guiding spirit of society at Tuxedo Park in the Ramapo Hills some forty-five miles from New York, was estimated to have

JOE ALEX MORRIS

added around fifty million dollars to his fortune in the last few years before he died at the age of ninety-one in 1931.

Yet a change was coming. The changing economy of the nation, the changing social patterns and especially the changing tax structure would soon begin to undermine the great mansions, villas and palaces—always called “cottages”—of Tuxedo, Newport, Bar Harbor, Fisher’s Island and White Sulphur Springs as well as other resorts where “society” had long circulated with the changing seasons. By 1954, there would be only 148 Americans with incomes of a million dollars annually. There would still be plenty of palatial homes at American resorts, more in fact than in the Twenties; but the vast hundred-room “Cottages” of the past would be gone or going, divided into apartments, turned into museums or torn down.

But in the final fabulous year of the Twenties there were only vague signs of the impending change, and the very rich as well as the very social segments of society were going strong. Southern California was becoming a popular wintertime spot, especially for travelers from the Northern farming states and many thousands were buying retirement homes there. But for society-minded folk, the sands of Florida beaches were most attractive and the Palm Beach Bath and Tennis Club—in its infancy in 1929—was perhaps the most expensive and the most glamorous society resort spot in America. Founder memberships at ten thousand dollars a throw were so oversubscribed that a quarter of a million was returned to disappointed applicants. Palm Beach was booming and the Gulf Stream Club refused an offer of a million dollars for a small strip of its waterfront property because it would necessitate moving the eighteenth hole of its golf links.

In the summer season, the village of Southampton, on the South Shore of Long Island, was probably the most popular of the fashionable resort spots and certainly the most lively. But there were elaborate establishments and incredibly expensive parties—sometimes lasting for days—all over in the dying

years of the Twenties. Marshall Field III had a \$1,300,000 estate on Long Island and another of a thousand acres, with an airport and race track, in Virginia. J. P. Morgan had a mansion in New York, a huge estate on Long Island, an estate in Hertfordshire, England, a town house in London, a shooting lodge in Scotland and a winter house in Bermuda. A Kentuckian named Preston P. Satterwhite owned a New York apartment that cost approximately a million dollars—the living room was sixty feet long—as well as a villa at Palm Beach and a half-million-dollar house on Long Island where he installed a hundred-thousand-dollar pipe organ.

The famous old resorts of Newport and Bar Harbor in 1929 were enjoying a mild revival of popularity that in retrospect would seem like the bright flare of a candle before it starts to die down. Later, the year would be called the end of an era in resort life. "Today," Cleveland Amory wrote much later in *The Last Resorts*,

the ragged remnants of the great resorts' Old Guards look back from their crumbling cottages to the era of the 1920's as financially the last of the Good Old Days. Those were the days, they say . . . the days of the private yachts and the private railroad cars, the private golf courses and the private polo fields, the private balls and the private art collections. Of all the personalities of those days, the two who are best remembered for cutting the largest swath in the era were unquestionably Philadelphia's famous pair of men-about-resorts, E. T. Stotesbury [a partner in the House of Morgan] and A. Atwater Kent [manufacturer of radios]; indeed, current resorters feel that the whole era of the 1920's was far better symbolized by this pair than by the late F. Scott Fitzgerald, a gentleman who, they feel, merely wanted to be in such rarefied Society.

There was one occasion, Mrs. Kent recalled later, when despite the fact that she had been doing her best her husband called her on the carpet about the expenses for entertaining and running the house.

"Mabel," he said sternly, "you aren't spending enough money."

JOE ALEX MORRIS

So far as is known, nothing like that ever happened to Mrs. Stotesbury, whose husband gave her four million dollars as a wedding present. One day a visitor noted with something of a shock that all of the bathroom fixtures were of gold, a departure that he later mentioned in an awed tone to Mrs. Stotesbury.

"Yes," she replied, "they're very economical. You don't have to polish them, you know."

This is doubtless as good a place as any to point out that there were not a few qualified experts who believed there was something cockeyed in the national economy in 1929. The warm glow of prosperity that seemed to hover over the land tended to fade under the scrutiny of tough-minded statisticians, whose studies suggested that there were a great many contradictions in the American way of life.

For one thing, the mania for installment buying—make a small deposit now and try to scrape up the weekly payments over a couple of years—had grown so rapidly that radios were ordinary equipment even in homes where the table fare was sparing, indeed. Surveys showed that almost half of the nation's factory workers owned some kind of automobile—they almost had to have one to get to work—but ignored the fact that most of them were ready for the junk heaps which were becoming familiar eyesores on the outskirts of every city.

Furthermore, although almost three million families owned two automobiles, America was not quite so richly endowed as a visitor from Mars might have imagined after reading the newspapers and taking a superficial look at life in the upper social strata. There were, for example, more than a million and a half unemployed persons in the country, according to Labor Department estimates which were regarded as very conservative. A Brookings Institution survey indicated conservatively that approximately six of every ten families in the United States had incomes of less than two thousand dollars which "may be regarded as sufficient to supply only the basic neces-

sities." Only eight families in every hundred had incomes above five thousand and only three in every hundred had incomes above ten thousand.

Americans in 1929 were intensely conscious of their native culture or lack of it, but there was a wide divergence of ideas as to just what cultural state the nation had achieved or just what it ought to try to achieve. During the early Twenties, this confusion of ideas had developed rapidly in various directions. Generally, the intellectuals were in revolt against the traditional American success story philosophy and the rigid conservatism exemplified by Big Business and the Coolidge administration. In *Babbitt*, Sinclair Lewis had bitterly downgraded the American business executive with his mania for mass production and standardization and his booster activities. Intellectuals were often scornful of the middle-class tendency to concentrate on "getting ahead" and Mencken's steady bombardment of the foibles of the "booboisie" created a picture of the Middle West as a Bible Belt in the grip of narrow-minded prohibition fanatics.

But at the same time, the Babbitts, the mass producers, the go-getters, the White Ribbon League leaders of the Bible Belt—all these targets of intellectual scorn—were plugging right ahead, building great cities, demanding better roads and better automobiles, improving school facilities, supporting symphony orchestras and art galleries, inventing labor-saving devices, building bigger churches with bigger pipe organs, setting up magnificent hospitals, turning in better golf scores and boosting the American way. If they were short on culture, they were long on industry and they were making such radical changes in the American economy that by 1954 no less than 72.1 per cent of the population of the country would be described by the U. S. Information Service as "middle class."

show business

Everybody said in 1929 that Broadway wasn't what it used to be, and they were probably right. The famous old restaurants, richly furnished and fashionable, and the famous old saloons, richly furnished and discreetly run, had become casualties of the Prohibition Era. The fashionable folk who had once frequented the famous street were gone, too, and in their place were the tourists, the gangsters, the petty chiselers, the ballyhoo artists, the racketeers and their molls. Mrs. Astor's little dinners for sixty-five guests were replaced by friends of Harry the Horse eating cheesecake at Lindy's restaurant with Damon Runyon and playing the matchstick game to see who paid.

But Broadway means show business, too; and show business in 1929 was at the climax of a wild whirl such as would not be seen again. In the course of the year no less than 224 plays of one kind or another, including revivals and holdovers, showed in New York's seventy-five theaters.

The normal run of even a successful show in 1929 was short in comparison to the runs of two or three years in later years, but the theatrical menu was varied. Walter Hampden was appearing in *Cyrano de Bergerac*; Helen Morgan was still in *Show Boat*; and Beatrice Lillie and Noel Coward in *This Year of Grace*. Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, so long that it required an afternoon and evening performance with a break for dinner, had opened in 1928 but was still running, as was the rowdy Chicago newspaper play, *The Front Page*, by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur. Fred Allen, once a Boston librarian and later a poor vaudeville juggler, was wisecracking his way through a musical called *Polly*; Katharine Cornell was in *The Age of Innocence*, and Mae West was swishing through

the title role in her own story of a Bowery bordello, *Diamond Lil*, en route to a day when she would knock America dead with a single line: "Why doncha come up an' see me sometime?" Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne were starring in *Caprice*.

W. C. Fields, a very good vaudeville juggler; Victor Moore, who would later immortalize Throttlebottom as Vice-President; Bert Lahr, who would eventually be a cowardly lion in *The Wizard of Oz*; and Eddie Cantor were all stars of Broadway musicals that year, and the four Marx Brothers were still doing fine in a zany production called *Animal Crackers*. Minnie Maddern Fiske, at sixty-four, after three score years on the stage, was as expert as ever in a disappointing play called *Ladies of the Jury*, and Margaret Anglin was the whole show in *Lady Dedlock*.

To round out some of the headline attractions—and there were a lot of them—there were *The Kingdom of God* with Ethel Barrymore, *Street Scene* (a Pulitzer Prize winner) by Elmer Rice, *A Most Immoral Lady* with Alice Brady, *Paris* with Irene Bordoni, *New Moon* with music by Sigmund Romberg, *The Wild Duck* with Blanche Yurka, *Jealousy* with Fay Bainter and John Halliday, *The Jealous Moon* with Jane Cowl, *Journey's End* with an all-British cast, *Congai* with Helen Menken, *Berkeley Square* with Leslie Howard, *Sherlock Holmes* with William Gillette, *The Sea Gull* with Eva Le Gallienne, *Strictly Dishonorable* with Muriel Kirkland and Tullio Carminati, *Fifty Million Frenchmen* with music by Cole Porter, *Sweet Adeline* with music by Jerome Kern, *Major Barbara* by George Bernard Shaw and some incomparable monologues by Ruth Draper.

One of the most popular shows of the year was a highly sophisticated satire on the life of song writers in Tin Pan Alley, by Ring Lardner and George S. Kaufman. It was called *June Moon*, dealt with young lovers, hard-boiled goldiggers, wise-cracking Broadwayites and a little number entitled "Give Our Child a Name" which posed a sentimental question:

JOE ALEX MORRIS

Should a father's carnal sins
Blight the life of babykins?

But perhaps it was Libby Holman who scored the biggest success of the season in a sophisticated revue, *The Little Show*—also featuring Clifton Webb—in which she sang in husky, torchy fashion:

Moanin' low . . . my sweet man . . . I love him so!

All of this—and other—theatrical fare failed to prove much except that there were always tired businessmen and out-of-town visitors to pay fancy prices for first-row seats at the musical comedies. In 1929, about the only theatrical ventures that could be regarded as significant were Rice's *Street Scene*, a story of highly charged emotions in a New York tenement house, and O'Neill's five-hour-long psychopathic study, *Strange Interlude*, which, incidentally, was suppressed in Boston. In a lighter vein there was *Strictly Dishonorable*, a bright and sophisticated number by a new but promising author, Preston Sturges, destined for a long career on Broadway and in Hollywood.

Broadway, of course, was not the whole world of show business. A great revolution had struck sun-baked Hollywood, some three thousand miles across the continent in southern California. The motion pictures, since the days of Mack Sennet comedies and *The Birth of a Nation*, had grown into a billion-and-a-half-dollar industry by producing black and white films that ran in eerie silence in more than fifteen thousand theaters in the United States—silent except for whatever incidental music the management might provide by hiring an orchestra in the city theaters or a piano player in the small towns where patrons were pretty sure to hear snatches from the *William Tell* overture whenever cowboys chased Indians across the screen. Whenever words were necessary to keep the audience abreast of the simple plot, the picture disappeared from the screen and a "subtitle," explaining the action or quot-

ing a few lines of conversation, was flashed on for a period long enough to permit a fourth-grader to read all of the words. The writing of subtitles had become a work of art and movie critics liked to point out occasions when a skilled specialist like Herman Mankiewicz had saved a weak picture just by composing subtitles that made the audience laugh frequently.

But in 1929 there were loud cries of despair echoing across the California desert. The movie industry had been stricken by a technological revolution called "the talkies." Hollywood's first "all talkie" with conversation and sound effects recorded was *The Lights of New York* in 1928. Yet the talkies came in slowly and even a year later there were some who doubted that silent pictures would be outmoded entirely. There were various reasons for this slowness. Some of the most famous studios—those which controlled chains of movie theaters—were caught short by the popularity of sound and couldn't catch up quickly. It cost at least half a million dollars to build a sound stage and it took time. It also cost theater owners up to twenty thousand dollars to install sound apparatus and by the late spring of 1929 there were only about two thousand such theaters in operation. Since sound recording was by no means perfected there were also complaints from the customers and *Variety* said that it was fifty-fifty whether the public would take to talking pictures after the first novelty wore off.

But the most tragic cries of anguish came from the ranks of the famous stars of silent movies when it dawned on them that a Brooklyn-born blonde could no longer play the role of a Grand Duchess in her native accent. Many of the silent stars had never appeared on a stage or learned a line, and their voices were not only untrained but often unsuited for sound. John Gilbert, for example, was an outstanding silent star but his high-pitched voice was too near a screech on the sound track. Pola Negri, a famous "vamp" from Europe, spoke little English. She retired. Many veteran stars secretly rushed to the voice culture studios for elocution lessons, often with poor results, and not a few movie magnates rushed to Broadway looking for trained voices.

Various companies turned out both silent and talkie versions of films in 1929, but the great percentage of all Hollywood production was frothy entertainment to which patrons were lured by advertisements that depended essentially on two words: supercolossal and sex. In contrast to the "vamps" starred in earlier movies, sex was epitomized in 1929 by a bright and smiling girl named Clara Bow, whom Elinor Glyn had endowed with "It." Miss Bow's new picture was *The Wild Party*—"Now she speaks from the screen; you know what 'It' is to see her."

Walt Disney's first animated cartoon, *Plane Crazy*, which had been made in 1928, was setting a new style in comedy attractions, and Ronald Colman was appearing in a good movie called *Bulldog Drummond*. Jimmy Durante, the big-nosed night club entertainer, deserted Broadway for a whirl at Hollywood, and Jack Benny, who had stuck with dying vaudeville until the last gasp, was now on the screen in *The Hollywood Revue*. Gary Cooper made *The Virginian*; Joan Crawford was a newcomer in *Dream of Love* and *Our Modern Maidens*; John Barrymore was in *Song of Songs* and brother Lionel in *Madame X*, an impressive picture with Ruth Chatterton as the star. Harold Lloyd, who ran a guileless smile and a fake pair of horn-rimmed spectacles into a fortune as a comedian in the silent movies, was doing his usual spine-chilling stunts (they were fake, too, but they were nonetheless chilling) on flagpoles and skyscraper window ledges in *Welcome Danger*.

With more than ten million homes equipped to receive broadcasts in 1929, the radio industry was growing up and radio had become of great political importance. Huey Long used it lavishly in his climb to power in Louisiana. President Hoover used it frequently to get his ideas across to the nation, making ninety-five radio talks between 1929 and 1932 or only nine less than President Roosevelt would make—with considerably greater effect—between 1932 and 1936.

What you heard on radio—as well as what it cost—was undergoing a radical transformation in 1929. The best-known

voice on the air may have been that of Milton Cross, who first appeared at New York's WJZ—the station was really in the Westinghouse plant near Newark then—looking for a job as a singer. He got it and his tenor voice went on the air until one day when the station needed an extra announcer. Cross took the job and made a career of it. He had excellent diction and a thorough knowledge of music and he would still be going strong—an expert at handling Metropolitan Opera broadcasts—when the mid-century mark rolled around. Norman Brokenshire was another famous radio voice in 1929 as was Edward B. Husing, better known as Ted, who joined the Columbia Broadcasting System in that year and became an expert at the kind of blow-by-blow sports announcing that Major Andrew White had originated at the Dempsey-Carpentier world's championship fight in 1921. Still better known as a sports announcer at the time, however, was Graham MacNamee, an excitable talker who projected to listeners a feeling of great enthusiasm and high adventure as well as, on some occasions, a rather scrambled version of what was going on in the boxing ring or on the sports fields. One more voice that was familiar to radio fans was that of Floyd Gibbons, a rapid-fire (217 words a minute) and informal news commentator who always began with a cozy "Hello everybody!" Lowell Thomas, who had written a best-selling biography of Lawrence of Arabia, substituted for Gibbons one night in 1930. He was quickly hired for regular broadcasts and became, in the next twenty-five years, one of the best-known news commentators.

Much of the hour-by-hour music heard over the air in America during 1929 was produced by phonograph records, but some notable musical and entertainment programs were on "live" through the favorable evening hours. Walter Damrosch conducted a symphony orchestra over WPAF in New York every Saturday at 9 P.M., and the program was picked up on a coast-to-coast network of NBC stations. Paul Whiteman's dance orchestra was heard regularly over the CBS network, and Maxwell House Coffee put on a performance adapted from the musical *Show Boat*, with Charles Winninger as Cap-

tain Henry and Lanny Ross, a romantic tenor, as the singing star. The real originator of the radio variety show, however, may have been a young orchestra leader who had made a success in Maine, at Yale, in London and New York after learning to play the saxophone by mail. His name was Rudy Vallee. Vallee played the saxophone, directed the orchestra, crooned through a megaphone, interviewed unusual people—Grand Duchess Marie of Russia, and Heavyweight Boxer Max Baer of California—and, for a while, almost turned the “Maine Stein Song” into the national anthem.

Nineteen twenty-nine was the year in which Kate Smith began her long career as a radio songstress and it was the year in which the “Amos and Andy” show was created and broadcast on a coast-to-coast hookup by Pepsodent. The soap operas hit the air that same year with “The Goldbergs,” originated by Gertrude Berg, one of the most successful. The radio quiz programs also were beginning with “Ask Me Another,” an adaptation of a parlor game, originated over WTIC in Hartford, Connecticut, by W. M. Hickey.

But in some ways the most remarkable character on the air in 1929 was a doctor out in Kansas, John Romulus Brinkley, who was busy demonstrating (1) that radio had more pulling power than even the experts had imagined and (2) that the newly created Federal Communications Commission was badly needed to keep radio under control. Dr. Brinkley had long been known as “the goat gland man” because of his rejuvenation operations in which goat glands were transplanted into human bodies. He gave medical advice over the air and urged listeners to write to him, which they did by the tens of thousands. In 1929 he started a program called “Dr. Brinkley’s Medical Question Box” on which he answered questions sent to him in letters and advised the writers to take Dr. Brinkley’s Prescription No. 24 or No. 67 or No. 78.

“Don’t get the impression that women are icebergs,” Brinkley would say in his broadcasts, “and content with impotent husbands. I know of more families where the devil is to pay in

fusses and temperamental sprees all due to the husband not being able to function properly. Now this operation, which I call 'Compound Operation,' consists of adding a new artery and nerve to the patient's own sex glands . . . which act as a charger. . . . My batting average is high. That is what counts. Well, what is my average? Oh, about 90 to 95 per cent! How's that?"

The success of KFKB, which broadcast a great deal of popular music by cowboy bands, and of Dr. Brinkley—at least in a financial way—was spectacular. He bought a yacht and a private airplane. He had a huge staff. He built a new hospital. He ran for governor of Kansas as a write-in candidate and lost by only thirty-three thousand votes to Harry Woodring, who later became Secretary of War. But he had long been under heavy fire from the American Medical Association, from the *Kansas City Star* and from the Kansas State Medical Board, which in 1930 revoked his license to practice. The Federal Radio Commission, by a vote of 2 to 3, refused to renew the license of KFKB. Brinkley promptly went to Mexico where he signed a twenty-year contract with the government to build the most powerful transmitter in the world—a hundred thousand watts—at Villa Acuna, just across the border from Del Rio, Texas. From there he offered medical advice to a bigger audience than ever in the United States but had to keep reminding his listeners to enclose two dollars in each letter to cover "the cost of postage, stenographic hire, office rent and so forth."

In 1932, Dr. Brinkley went back to Kansas and again ran for governor. The state and the A.M.A. had thrown the book at him and the federal government had kicked him off the air. But his radio audience still loved him. He carried more counties than either of his two opponents but—protesting that he had been robbed—he lost by thirty thousand votes to Alf M. Landon, who would be the Republican nominee for President in 1936.

the printed word

Like everybody else, the leading lights of American literature in 1929 were profoundly affected by what was happening in Wall Street and not a few seemed to be more interested in the daily fluctuations in the price of U. S. Steel than in the state of American letters. During the early Twenties, there had been a great deal of experimentation in structure and language by John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and others, who had exercised a marked influence on American writers. There had also been a broad strain of cynicism and disillusionment as a kind of hangover from the war. But by 1929 some of the bitterness was beginning to fade out. That angry, red-headed journalist from Sauk Centre, Minnesota—Sinclair Lewis—was still going strong, but his new book, *Dodsworth*, broadstroke commentary on Americans traveling on the Continent, was written with a great deal less venom than *Main Street*, *Babbitt*, *Arrowsmith* or *Elmer Gantry*.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, the "laureate of the Jazz Age," was living largely in a blaze of liquor on the French Riviera, where he was vainly trying to work on a new novel and just as vainly trying to pick a quarrel with his old friend, Hemingway. Fitzgerald was drinking so heavily that he fancied Hemingway had snubbed him, possibly an outgrowth of Fitzgerald's increasing difficulties in writing at a time when Hemingway was moving steadily upward in the field of literature. A brilliant stylist, Hemingway had been acclaimed for his short stories and a novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, a hard-boiled story of cynical and restless society in Europe. In 1929, however, he published a deeply romantic novel of a young couple in Italy during the war, *A Farewell to Arms*. The eloquent descriptive passages opening the

novel and the poetic use of modern idiom in the final tragic dialogue between the lovers, which Hemingway said he rewrote seventy times, were often described as the finest in modern American literature. Two other novels that could be more accurately described as war novels were published in America that year, the first top literary works to come out of the conflict that had ended eleven years earlier. They were both antiwar books by Europeans—Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Stefan Zweig's *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*—and both were best-sellers in America.

Late in the year two other important American novels were published, *The Sound and the Fury*, a story of the disintegration of an aristocratic Southern family by William Faulkner, and *Look Homeward, Angel* by a new writer, Thomas Wolfe.

A good many of America's prominent writers were spending much of the time in 1929 turning out articles, short stories and serials for the big-circulation magazines and newspapers. There were then about 125 magazines of all kinds listed in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, although some of them were going broke and a substantial percentage would disappear in the next decade. Among the high-brow magazines the most widely respected included the *Atlantic Monthly*, under the command of Editor Ellery Sedgwick, *Harper's Monthly* and *Scribner's*; the *Saturday Review of Literature*, edited by Henry Seidel Canby; and, in a slightly different field, the *Nation*, edited by Oswald Garrison Villard. The *Literary Digest* was making a determined effort to stand off the youthful weekly news magazine, *Time*, but would go under within a few years after conducting one of its famous pre-election polls—this one showing that Alf Landon would be elected President in 1936.

The so-called popular or mass circulation magazines of the day—neither *Life* nor *Look* had yet been born—were booming, with the *Saturday Evening Post* regularly running around 200 pages each issue and sometimes going above 250 pages.

JOE ALEX MORRIS

In December of 1929 one issue of the magazine broke all records for size with 272 pages of reading matter, pictures and advertisements at the bargain price of five cents.

The magazine competition for big name writers was won by Editor Ray Long, a short, breezy man who would eventually renounce modern civilization and flee to the South Seas but who, in 1929, was very much in the midst of things as the guiding spirit of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. One Sunday in the winter of 1929, Long called a secret conference of a few members of his staff and revealed to them that he was throwing out the lead article in the April issue in order to make room for a "scoop" that he had been working on for months. The scoop article was divided into a number of sections before being sent to the printer so that no linotype operator could make much sense out of what he had a chance to read. Private detectives were hired to guard the plant where the article was assembled and plates were made and 1,850,000 copies of the April issue were run off. Then the magazines were distributed by express rather than by freight—an extra cost of twelve thousand dollars—and wholesalers were sworn not to reveal the contents. But by this time the cloak-and-dagger scenario had run out and rumors of the great scoop seeped out into publishing circles. Three days before publication date Long announced that *Cosmopolitan* was publishing an article, "On Entering and Leaving the Presidency," by Calvin Coolidge. Mr. Coolidge also had contracted, at a dollar a word, to write a daily, hundred-word syndicated newspaper commentary on the state of the world, and his income from writing that year amounted to more than two hundred thousand dollars or almost three times his annual salary as President. But Mr. Coolidge, whose fellow authors in the April issue included Irvin S. Cobb, Beverly Nichols, E. Phillips Oppenheim and Theodore Dreiser, proved to be even less exciting in print than he had been in the White House. The style as well as the content of his newspaper commentary can best be illustrated by one excerpt: "When more and more people are thrown out of work, unemployment results."

Perhaps the most unusual and interesting venture in the magazine field was *The New Yorker*, which had been started in 1925 as "a reflection in word and picture of metropolitan life" and which by 1929 was beginning to work up a reputation for wit, sophistication and good writing all over the nation. Compared to the circulation figures of the popular "slick" magazines, *The New Yorker* was a small operation centered in Manhattan. But it attracted some of the most remarkable writers and cartoonists of the day and some of the most remarkable publishing legends of any day centered around its editor, Harold Ross, and his staff, which included such writers as Robert Benchley, James Thurber, E. B. White, Dorothy Parker, Alexander Woollcott, Wolcott Gibbs, and, for a brief time, Ellin Mackay, the wife of Irving Berlin.

Editor Ross was a Colorado boy who quit school at some indefinite but early age, became a newspaper reporter before he was fifteen and acquired a vocabulary of profanity that was considered remarkable even during his service in the Army. Ross was profoundly ignorant on many subjects but he was a tireless worker, a painstaking editor and, to most of his staff, some kind of a genius. *New Yorker* articles were checked and rechecked and rewritten and then torn apart and written again before Ross's search for perfection could be satisfied. Captions under cartoons, usually limited to one line, were worked over by half a dozen staff members. One such caption under a cartoon by Peter Arno was around the office for three years before Ross was satisfied and published it.

Nobody ever quite explained why Ross was so successful as editor of the magazine, although a great many people tried to analyze his methods. Perhaps as good an explanation as any was his own: "An editor prints what pleases him and if enough people like what he likes, then he is a success."

In an entirely different way, the same thing might have been said for another successful publisher, DeWitt Wallace, who started *Reader's Digest* in a Greenwich Village basement with nothing more than an idea that people were in such a hurry

they would appreciate a magazine that gave them all of the significant articles of the day in abbreviated form. Wallace came from a family of preachers and the *Reader's Digest* tended to reprint, in abbreviated form, many "inspirational" articles, to emphasize the necessity for self-reliance and thrift and hard work, to point out that spiritual happiness was more important than material success. It would be difficult to imagine a more successful formula in the publishing business. From a circulation of fifteen hundred in 1922, *Reader's Digest* rose in less than twenty-five years to more than twelve million circulation printed in many languages and supervised from a handsome plant in a New York village called Chappaqua.

A comparative newcomer to the publishing field was Henry R. Luce, who with Briton Hadden had founded a weekly news magazine called *Time*, and was getting ready to publish a plush business magazine called *Fortune*. The pithy and abbreviated style developed by *Time* and its inventive manner of combining several words into one to save space caused considerable distress among some old-time journalists, but the magazine caught the public fancy during the late Twenties and by 1929 was a flourishing foundation for Luce's magazine empire, which later included *Life* and *Sports Illustrated*.

The last year of the Twenties was not only a lush period for the magazines—they would not enjoy such a year again in the next decade or longer because of depression, wartime paper rationing and new competition for advertising revenue—but for the nation's newspapers as well. Expenditures for advertising space were at a new peak of about eight hundred million dollars a year for almost two billion agate lines, and the Sunday editions of such papers as the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Times* were so swollen that subscribers groaned as they lifted them from the front doorstep.

Almost all newspapers were giving their readers more of everything due to the rapid growth of syndication and a steady improvement in the big news services, but there were so many

newspapers that not all of them could operate profitably except in boom times. In New York City, for example, there were eighteen daily newspapers of some stature—not counting specialized newspapers or foreign language journals—in 1929. But in the next quarter-century ten of them would fold or be merged, including the *American*, the *World* and *Evening World*, the *Evening Graphic*, the *Brooklyn Eagle* and the *Evening Sun*.

Syndicated newspaper columns were not new, but the syndicates were just entering a period of tremendous growth. A new breed of columnists was coming to the fore. Of these, the foremost was a hurrying little man who was not a newspaperman at all but a former vaudeville troupier who gathered a column of Broadway gossip and theatrical news for the raucous New York *Graphic*, a tabloid owned by Health Faddist Bernarr Macfadden. The *Graphic's* Broadway expert was Walter Winchell. Macfadden hired him in 1924 to write a column called "Your Broadway and Mine" and he covered the city's night spots so thoroughly, reporting romances, quarrels, divorces, births and marriages among the theatrical and gay society folk, that his column soon became famous along "the main stem" and his vocabulary notorious. In 1929 he was lured away from the *Graphic*, which had originally paid him a hundred dollars a week, by the New York *Daily Mirror*, which offered him five hundred a week and half of the income from syndication by the Hearst organization. By syndication, and later on radio and television, Winchell became known all over the country, rose to great affluence and had many imitators.

Unquestionably, Winchell introduced a new note into journalism, or at least into the newspapers. But a definite change in ways was taking place anyway. In the past, the only way to get the news in a hurry was through the newspapers. But now radio was carrying news everywhere instantaneously, and radio was a keen competitor for advertising revenue. Publishers were fearful of such competition and began searching for special features that would hold the attention of readers. The syndication

JOE ALEX MORRIS

of columnists was one appeal to readers. More and better pictures was another. Photographs of the inauguration of President Hoover were snapped in Washington in the early afternoon, developed in a special "dark room" on an airplane en route to New York and published, after being transmitted by telephoto process, in many newspapers on the same day. The McClure Newspaper Syndicate came to the aid of publishers with an imposing array of writers: Glenn Frank with editorial comment, Fannie Hurst with a regular fiction story, Dr. Logan Clendenning to advise readers on health problems, Bruce Barton with a regular "inspirational" message and William Lyon Phelps with essays every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Reporters—including David Lawrence—of "inside stuff" from Washington were very much in demand.

In addition to all of these features were the "comic strips," which had become a big-time industry. "Winnie Winkle, the Breadwinner"; "Mutt and Jeff"; "Bringing Up Father" with Jiggs and Maggie; "Polly and Her Pals"; "Our Boarding House"; "Skippy"; "Moon Mullins"; "Orphan Annie"; "Krazy Kat"; "Wash Tubbs"; "Freckles and His Friends"; and "Gasoline Alley" were among the popular strips. But perhaps the most avidly read comic was Andy Gump, a bald-headed, windy man who was endowed by Sidney Smith with all of the frailties of the average man.

A staunch believer in the pulling power of comics was Captain Joseph Medill Patterson, who had launched the tabloid New York *Daily News* in 1919. The *Daily News* grew fat on pictures and sensationalism. In 1928 it had published a photograph—it filled the entire front page—of Ruth Snyder, the instigator of the murder of her husband by her lover, dying in the electric chair at Sing Sing prison. The photograph was taken by a photographer who strapped a small camera to his ankle and managed to get a front-row seat in the execution chamber, where he could pull up his pants leg and snap the shutter with a wire that extended to his pocket.

The *Daily News* was often denounced, but Patterson had an

WHAT A YEAR!

unfailing instinct for popular success. By 1929 the newspaper had a Sunday circulation of 1,600,000 and was building a new ten-million-dollar plant on Forty-second Street, and it was being read avidly not only in the kitchen and the butler's pantry but in the drawing rooms along Fifth Avenue. Its headlines dealt with divorce proceedings, alienation suits, love nests and murder:

TORCH FIEND KILLED BRIDE
TO MASK ILLICIT LOVE LIFE

Earl Peacock Strangled Dot,
Burned Body in Woods

TRACE PYRE FIEND'S ALIBI GIRL
TO NIGHT VIGIL AT WIFE'S BODY

Torch Killer's Head
A Vacillating Type

The *Evening Graphic* went a step farther in its efforts to keep up with the *Daily News*. It produced what it called "composographs"—photographs that were pasted together and touched up by an artist or were posed by models to illustrate a news story. Thus the *Graphic* could present a vivid if faked picture of the sinking of the S.S. *Vestris* late in 1928, with the ship going down in the background and wild-eyed men and women struggling with sharks in the foreground; or an intimate bedroom scene in which unidentified persons posed as the principals in a current news story. Such extreme irresponsibility did not continue long, but the trend that had been set would continue and would expand—a trend that some people approved as a sign of franker and more thorough reporting, that others regarded as an invasion of privacy and still others denounced as just plain bad taste.

farewell to arms

World War I had failed to "make the world safe for Democracy" but it had pretty well convinced people in 1929 that another big conflict—this time with airplanes to shower bombs and poison gas on the world capitals—would mean the end of our civilization. In books, in magazines and in the newspapers, expert writers on military affairs were wont to explain in gruesome detail how New York City, or London or Paris or Berlin, would quickly be reduced to a jumbled pile of stones by aerial bombardment.

The general public took such predictions calmly because in 1929 nobody seemed likely to be foolish enough to start another war. Oh, there were troublemakers around, military violence in Mexico and China for instance, but they were comparatively minor affairs and they were overshadowed by a surprising gesture of peace performed in Italy by Europe's most skillful professional sword-rattler, Fascist Premier Benito Mussolini. One momentous day the Italian dictator entered a side door of the gloomy old Lateran Palace, which contains the Mother Church of Christendom, and sat at a long redwood table with Pietro, Cardinal Gasparri, the witty and massive Papal Secretary of State. In deepest secrecy, both signed a concordat that ended the self-imposed "imprisonment" since 1871 of the Pope within the Vatican.

The Lateran Accord brought joy to Catholics throughout the world. "God has been restored to Italy," the Pope said, "and Italy has been restored to God."

Comparatively few Americans were familiar with the name of Salmon Oliver Levinson, a lawyer living in Chicago. Yet on one occasion when President Hoover, Secretary of State Stim-

son, members of the diplomatic corps and a bevy of generals and admirals gathered in formal array at the White House, Levinson was the only private citizen invited to be present. The invitation was issued because Levinson was the chairman of the American Committee for the Outlawry of War. His committee represented the hopes of American citizens that war could be banished from the earth and, to that end, it had proposed and worked for an agreement among nations never again to resort to armed force. Levinson saw a dream come true that day in the White House when the President promulgated a General Treaty for the Renunciation of War.

The treaty, informally known as the Kellogg-Briand Pact or the Pact of Paris, was ultimately signed by sixty-two nations, which solemnly agreed to settle all conflicts by pacific means and to renounce war as an instrument of national policy.

President Hoover's immediate problem on the road to permanent peace was a deadlock between the United States and Great Britain in regard to limitation or reduction of naval arms. The 1927 Naval Disarmament Conference at Geneva had ended in failure because the British wanted to limit construction of heavy cruisers but not of light cruisers while the United States wanted exactly the opposite. As a result of this deadlock, the United States Congress had passed a "big navy" construction bill and appeared ready to start an armaments race instead of co-operating in a general reduction. Mr. Hoover, however, instructed U. S. Ambassador to Belgium, Hugh S. Gibson, to appear before the League of Nations Preparatory Disarmament Commission with a compromise plan under which the powers were urged to agree on a common formula for measuring the combative strength of naval vessels and then seek an all-around reduction.

But before anything could come of the Hoover proposals there was a general election in Britain and, surprisingly, it resulted in a victory for the Labor party and J. Ramsay MacDonald, who became Prime Minister. MacDonald promptly stopped construction of several new British warships and an-

JOE ALEX MORRIS

nounced that he would go to Washington to talk with Mr. Hoover about holding another naval disarmament conference. The President met this gesture by announcing postponement of construction of three new American cruisers.

The courtly, white-haired MacDonald, accompanied by his daughter, Ishbel, arrived in October, 1929, to be given an enthusiastic welcome in New York City, where a press agent named Hector Fuller, who was serving as Mayor Walker's master of ceremonies, announced him to the Mayor and the radio audience as "the Prime Minister of the United States."

For a while, it seemed likely that Ishbel would steal the newspaper headlines from the statesmen. The reporters went slightly mad with joy when she said that she never took a drink, didn't even powder her nose, didn't know how to drive an automobile, didn't like to dance and didn't intend to pay any attention to letters from American boys who had proposed marriage. "American girls," she added, "seem much the same as British girls except that they wear their clothes at different angles."

But, having slept in Abraham Lincoln's bed at the White House and having talked over the state of the world with Mr. Hoover while sitting on a log at the President's Rapidan fishing camp, the Prime Minister eventually got back into the news. A statement issued by the two leaders said they were so close to agreement on naval disarmament that past obstacles seemed to have been substantially removed. Another conference on naval disarmament was called to meet in London early in 1930. There was, however, a degree of uncertainty behind the high hopes expressed by the President and the Prime Minister. The Japanese, for example, were suddenly demanding an increased ratio of naval arms compared to the United States and Britain. This was generally regarded as rather foolish but troublesome. Most experts were ready to testify that Japan was really a second-rate world power; that there was no actual danger to the United States from that quarter because the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii was an impregnable bastion against any threat from the Orient.

the troubled land of plenty

All that summer under a hot sun the harvesters moved northward across the face of America, gathering the crops on six million farms. More than eleven million men joined in the work from the cotton fields of Georgia to the vineyards of California, from the rice paddies of Louisiana to the wheat fields of North Dakota.

Yet in the midst of plenty there were moans of anguish. For several years the agricultural situation had been deteriorating in the United States. Almost five thousand farms were legally placed in bankruptcy during 1929 and many others were losing money or on the verge of failure. The total debt of American farms on property valued at fifty-eight billion dollars was approximately ten billion dollars in 1929, and many farmers didn't know where the next interest payment was coming from because the bottom had dropped out of market prices. Wheat, which had reached a peak of \$2.34 a bushel a decade earlier, was down to \$0.98. Corn which had sold for \$1.50 a bushel brought not more than \$0.79.

The trouble was that farmers had greatly expanded production during and immediately after the war when they could sell all they produced at high prices. In the 1920's they kept on producing at wartime levels. Meanwhile, European nations had resumed farm production and reduced the foreign market.

The cotton crop in 1929 was three million bales under the eighteen million record set in 1926. But there was still too much of it. Cotton that had sold for twenty-eight cents a pound in 1923 was down to seventeen cents and surplus stocks of several million bales were being piled up in storage. In Georgia, the net income of the average farmer was not more than three hundred dollars a year, perhaps a third of it in cash and the rest in credit.

The sharecropper's life usually was so meager that many of

JOE ALEX MORRIS

the younger people jumped at any chance to get away from it, rushing to the towns and cities to work in factories. Compared to the shanties in which they had grown up, some company villages erected near the mills in Southern towns seemed like luxury to many of the migrants and the pay represented more cash in a month or so than most of them had ever seen in a year.

But the change in agriculture was a great deal more than just the migration of young people to the cities. The land was wearing out in many places—in the cotton states, for example—and cotton was moving westward. By 1929, 47 per cent of the nation's large-scale cotton farms (those grossing better than thirty thousand dollars a year) were in Arizona and California, where the yield would be pushed up to more than five hundred pounds per acre or double the national average. For the first time official concern over misuse of the nation's land became serious enough to prompt Congress to make appropriations for investigation of the effects of erosion and of methods for its control. But even then it was not easy to get farmers to change their wasteful ways, and it would take the great, destructive dust storms of the 1930's to convert some of them to the necessity for modern conservation methods.

The long-cherished theory that if business is booming and the rich are getting richer the benefits of general prosperity at the top will trickle down to the working man at the base of the pyramid seemed to be flourishing in 1929. But the degree of prosperity enjoyed by the working man was not easy to establish statistically because his family was buying everything from vacuum cleaners to automobiles on the installment plan and because cost-of-living figures can be deceptive. A government committee's study found that the cost of living had declined seven-tenths of one per cent between 1922 and 1929 and that, with wages increasing, the purchasing power of the working man's family had gone up about 14 per cent. Yet there were signs of discontent. The decrease in union membership, for example, was halted during 1929 and the A.F. of L. en-

listed 37,482 new members before the end of the year. There was mounting unemployment in some New England towns where textile operators, complaining about union demands for higher wages and increasing local taxation, closed down their mills or moved to new locations in the South. And in the South there was labor strife, and bloodshed and murder.

One of the New England textile mills that looked hopefully to the South was the Manville-Jenckes Company of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, which by 1929 was producing yarn for cord tires at the Loray mills in the North Carolina town of Gastonia. That spring, however, organizers for the National Textile Workers Union persuaded a thousand Loray workers to strike for a twenty-dollar minimum weekly wage, a forty-hour week, reduction of rates for utilities in the company-owned houses and recognition of the union. Mill owners replied that the National Textile Workers Union was "Communitic" and that one of its organizers was a representative of the Communist newspaper, *Daily Worker*. They closed the Loray mill and Governor Max Gardner called out two hundred state militiamen to keep order in the worried, restless town of Gastonia, where nine of every ten men were now jobless.

After a few days, the mill owners began hiring other workers and resumed operations on a limited scale under protection of the militia. Bitterness mounted in the town as the strikebreakers moved in and the strikers went hungry. Strikers were evicted from company-owned houses. Their food supply was low. Their ranks dwindled and the remnants of the striking band gathered in a tent camp on the edge of town. The union modified its demands, but Loray manager, J. A. Baugh, would not talk to them, asserting that they were merely "discharged employees." Militiamen continued to patrol the streets, breaking up demonstrations and, on one occasion, attacking several score of strikers with clubs and bayonets. Two strikers, aged sixteen and fifteen, were arrested. Even the storekeepers of Gastonia were beginning to complain that they could not stop for a conversation

JOE ALEX MORRIS

with friends on the street without being prodded by a bayonet and told to move on.

One day Police Chief Orville F. Aderholt, who was said to have been informed that a fight had broken out in the strikers' tent camp, rushed there with a group of armed police. The "guard" at the camp opened fire on them, asserting later that in view of past tactics of police and militiamen he was convinced that the camp was being attacked. General firing ensued. Aderholt was fatally wounded and three policemen and one union organizer, Joseph Harrison, were wounded.

Eventually, sixteen persons including three young women were brought to trial at Charlotte on charges of murder in connection with the death of Police Chief Aderholt at Gastonia. Both sides made the most of the national spotlight that centered on the trial. A defense lawyer, Tom P. Jimson, told reporters the trial was a "frame-up" and that they should not be "fooled into believing that this is nothing but a murder trial because it is a Labor Case and will take its place in history with notable struggles against oppression and exploitation."

The prosecution was not to be outdone. As it opened its case, court attendants wheeled into the courtroom a stretcher, covered with a white sheet. In deathly silence, the prosecutor stepped before the jury box and whipped off the sheet—revealing a plaster effigy of Aderholt in blood-covered police uniform, his face white and ghastly beneath a big black-brimmed hat. The jury shuddered at the grisly sight. That night one juror begged a deputy sheriff for a pistol so that he might kill himself. He confessed his sins and asked to be buried face down. Then he crawled under a bed and officers had to drag him out. A physician declared he was the victim of "acute emotional insanity" and the judge declared a mistrial.

It was a month before the trial could be resumed and, meantime, there were various outbreaks of violence—three union men were kidnaped and beaten after being threatened with hanging and a group of strikers in a truck was fired upon by men in several automobiles. A woman was killed and several

others wounded. But when the trial resumed, the state agreed to reduce the charges against seven defendants to second-degree murder and to release nine others. The star of the second trial was Prosecuting Attorney John G. Carpenter, a handsome man with a flower in his buttonhole. He described the labor organizers as "fiends incarnate, stripped of their hoofs and horns, bearing guns instead of pitchforks, creeping like the hellish serpent into the Garden of Eden" that had been Gastonia without a union. In dramatic fashion, he acted out the death of Aderholt, falling mortally wounded to the courtroom floor, moaning and writhing before the jury box. He tenderly held the hand of Aderholt's widow as he recited a poem on motherhood. He said that Gastonia was a town with "vine-clad doors where the kindly light of the autumn sun kisses the curly hair of happy children." He described the mill owners as "a holy gang, a God-serving gang."

The jury was out only an hour. It found the defendants guilty. Four organizers from Northern cities were sentenced to from seventeen to twenty years in prison. Three strikers who were natives of Gastonia were sentenced to shorter terms. "Justice," said the *Gastonia Gazette*, "has triumphed."

the world of sports

The Golden Decade of Sports might be said, rather inaccurately, perhaps, to have ended one breezy day in January of 1929 when a long line of men and women filed through the doors of Madison Square Garden in an eerie silence such as seldom graced that famous arena of champions. They shuffled—thirty-five thousand of them—past soft-voiced police guards, past solemn-faced men in frock coats, past a half-acre of flowers and came at last to a fifteen-thousand-dollar bronze and glass coffin in which lay the body of a baldish, thin-lipped, paunchy Texan named George L. Rickard. He had been better known as Tex Rickard, the man who made prize fighting respectable at a million dollars a fight.

"They must have him tied down in there so he can't turn," mused a sports writer who stood apart from the throng filing past the bier. "Otherwise, Tex would be spinning in that box if he could see all this crowd coming into the Garden for free."

Yet the harsh wisecrack covered a sincere regret that the famous sports promoter had been struck down by a gangrenous appendix when he was at the peak of his career and at a time when vast numbers of Americans were still eager and financially able to support the boxing racket in a style that its stars never dreamed of until the Roaring Twenties.

What the New York *Herald Tribune's* W. O. McGeehan liked to refer to as "the manly art of modified murder" had come a long way under the guidance of Tex Rickard. Boxing had moved out of the back alley and become a spectacle that, for the first time, was staged with regard for the comfort of customers and in surroundings suitable for women fans. Wrestling, too, had become respectable during the 1920's and such stars of the "grunt-and-groan" profession as Jim Londos,

Stanislaus Zbyszko, Joe Stecher, Strangler Lewis and Gus Sonnenberg were putting on colorful and exciting contests on tours that carried them all over the nation.

Strangely enough, the most remarkable figure in the heavy-weight world in 1929 was a wrestler from Italy. His name was Primo Carnera and he was still bigger than Campolo, bigger in fact than anybody who ever made a name in the boxing ring. It is also probable that he was dumber; and it is certain that he was one of the weirdest, most pitiable figures that ever climbed through the ropes. Happy, good-natured and harmless, Carnera stood six feet, eleven and one-half inches, weighed 280 pounds, wore a size twenty-four collar and size twenty-one shoes. He had wrestled professionally in Italy but was billed—falsely, most experts agreed—as a pugilist in the United States. Even an amateur could see that he was no boxer, but his freakish size made him a good drawing card and he was later brought to the United States to participate in a series of smelly matches. Carnera didn't know that most of his opponents had been paid or otherwise "persuaded" by mobsters to "take a dive" and he tried hard. He was so clumsy and inexperienced, however, that in an early bout in America his opponent had an extremely difficult time making it appear that he had been hit hard enough for a "knockout."

But so sad was the state of boxing that in 1933 the gangsters made Carnera champion of the world with a knockout of Jack Sharkey, which few experts viewed with anything but suspicion. Then, innocently believing himself a great fighter, Carnera was forced to face challengers for the championship who couldn't be intimidated by the mobsters. Max Baer, the first one he met, knocked him down thirteen times in less than eleven rounds, wrestled and rolled with him all over the ring, jeered at him and easily relieved him of his championship belt.

Baseball players in 1929 wore their pants tighter and shorter than they would a quarter-century later and they expected a good pitcher to go nine innings—or else! "I'd hate to pitch now-

JOE ALEX MORRIS

adays," Dazzy Vance, who won fourteen and lost thirteen for Brooklyn in 1929, said after being elected to the Hall of Fame in 1955. "What used to be a pitchers' world has been made into a hitters' world. . . . The public doesn't pay to see a two-to-one pitchers' battle any more. They pay to see the home run—the long ball, I should say, to keep in step with the new lingo—and the people who run the game are making it easier and easier for the guy who swings the bat to get his homer. . . . It sort of makes me sick. I'm glad I pitched when I did."

There must have been something in Vance's complaint. In 1929, he played in thirty-one games, faced almost a thousand batters and allowed a hundred earned runs. In thirteen games played in Brooklyn he held the opposition to three runs or less on all but five occasions. Yet in that year Vance was rated fifteenth among National League pitchers. And in that year only 754 home runs were hit in the League as compared to a total of 1,214 in 1954, an increase of about 60 per cent.

In 1929, however, the influence of Babe Ruth was strong and the sluggers were coming to the fore, aided by introduction of the "lively" baseball. Officials of A. G. Spalding and Brothers, makers of the baseball, insisted that the official standard had not been changed since 1920 when, apparently, a layer of rubber had been added. Most players and sports writers, however, were convinced that the ball was a "rabbit" that gave batters greater power. They pointed out that back in 1913 the famous slugger, Home Run Baker, had been able to hit only twelve balls out of the park as compared to Babe Ruth's sixty in 1927. Whatever the facts, the fans were showing increasing enthusiasm for the long ball hitters and in the future the sluggers would become more and more important to the box office.

College football got away to an odd start in 1929. In the Rose Bowl at Pasadena on New Year's Day, the Golden Bears of the University of California were hosts to the Golden Tornado of Georgia Tech in a game that held the attention of fans all over the nation. The teams were evenly matched and neither could

score in the opening quarter, but in the next period the Californians got a break—or so it seemed for a moment—when Tech fumbled and the ball rolled free near the Southerners' thirty-five-yard line. Roy Riegels, the center and captain-elect of the Bears, came roaring out of the scrambled mass of players, scooped up the ball and started twisting and turning to elude Tech's tacklers. On one attempt to dodge the enemy, he turned completely around and then took off at full speed toward the wrong goal line.

Tens of thousands of voices groaned, shouted warnings but the dazed Riegels merely hugged the ball closer and ran harder. Benny Lom, a speedy California halfback, gave chase, fell upon his teammate on the three-yard line after a sixty-yard run and turned him around. But it was too late. Half a dozen Tech tacklers crashed into them, driving the ball back to the one-yard marker. On the next play, Lom's attempt to punt was blocked and the ball hit a California player before rolling out of the end zone. Georgia Tech scored a two-point safety and won the game, 8 to 7.

Riegels' wrong-way run was the most talked about football incident of the year but, in the opinion of not a few old-time fans, it was merely indicative of a trend. Modern football, they complained, was changing rapidly—and in the wrong direction. There was too much emphasis on specialization by players. Nobody had yet heard of the two-platoon system, but coaches sent in substitutes so often that a man sitting in the stands, swathed in a raccoon coat and nursing a whisky flask, couldn't tell who was playing what position half of the time. Too many players were softies, unable to last an entire game. Why, in the old days a substitute never got a chance to play unless somebody broke a leg, but in 1929 it was headline news when eleven Army players went the entire sixty minutes without a substitution against Notre Dame.

The greatest change, however, was to be found in the way college football had become Big Business—a fifty-million-dollar-a-year business—in America. All over the country, col-

leges and universities had awakened to the realization that there was money in the football racket; lots of money. There were, of course, certain problems. You had to have a big stadium to accommodate fifty or one hundred thousand customers and, after you had built it, you had to pay for it. To pay for it, you had to have a winning football team. By 1929 there weren't enough good football players in the normal registration at any college to constitute a winning big-time team and coaches who wanted to keep their jobs were secretly scouring the country for "amateurs" who could be persuaded—by suitable rewards—to enroll in their colleges. The scholastic ability of many of these recruits was highly doubtful, but it was usually possible to persuade the faculty that it would be better to permit the players to coast through their examinations than to have the college go bankrupt because of failure to meet payments due on the stadium bonds. As a result, a young man with strong muscles and powerful legs could make a short career of college football, meet the best people and, if he had the inclination, even acquire an education if it didn't interfere with regular practice sessions.

The most important development in the sports field at the end of the 1920's may have been the growth of interest in golf and tennis, with increasing participation by women players. Americans had more leisure time than ever before and in the future they would have even greater leisure and the boom in participation sports would become phenomenal.

In tennis, popular interest was intensified by two famous stars of the court, Big Bill Tilden and Helen Wills. Tilden had passed the peak of his career after having won the national singles title half a dozen times but he managed to stagger through to his last triumph in 1929.

Miss Wills, who had come from California as a pig-tailed, poker-faced teen-ager in the early Twenties, lost the final match of the 1922 tournament to Mrs. F. I. Mallory, who had long reigned as women's singles champion. But the next year Miss Wills came back to take the title, which she held except for one

year until 1930. Miss Wills, who hit a tennis ball almost as hard as a man, made the white eyeshade a national fad for women tennis players, convinced most sports writers that she was a spoiled young lady, convinced most women tennis players that they didn't belong on the same court with the champion, was presented to the Queen of England and retired while still near the top of her game.

Golf was steadily gaining in popularity throughout the Twenties and Maureen Orcutt, Glenna Collett and young Helen Hicks were as well known on the links as was Miss Wills on the tennis court. Gene Sarazen, Francis Ouimet, Tommy Armour, Al Espinosa and Walter Hagen, who gave the Prince of Wales a couple of lessons during a visit to England, were outstanding players, but they usually had to take off their caps to a rugged Georgian named Robert Tyre Jones. Bobby Jones had twice won the National Open and four times had taken the National Amateur, but he had a rough year in 1929. In the final round of the National Open at Mamaroneck, New York, he needed only a routine 80 to beat the 294 already scored by leader Al Espinosa. But he took seven strokes on each of two par-four holes and managed to gain a tie only by sinking a long putt on the eighteenth green. In the play-off he easily defeated Espinosa but a jinx seemed to be hovering over him from time to time. In September a kid from Nebraska, John Goodman, who often bummed his way to tournaments by riding freight cars, knocked Jones out of the National Amateur tournament in the first round. Another youngster, Lawson Little, Jr., defeated Goodman the next day but the title was won by Jimmy Johnston, a St. Paul broker.

Jones, however, wasn't seriously discouraged. The next year he shook off the jinx and became the only player ever to make a "grand slam" by winning the four major golf championships—the American Amateur and Open tournaments and the British Amateur and Open tournaments—in a single year.

big business

The American market place was never so busy, never so exuberant as in 1929 and men who were interested in Big Business were never more confident—with a few exceptions. Two of the exceptions were Chicagoans. One was a seventy-year-old English-born financier named Samuel Insull, a coldly arrogant man with white hair and a neatly clipped white mustache, an admirer of opera singer Mary Garden, the builder of a twenty-million-dollar opera house and office building and the czar of a public utilities empire that stretched from Lake Michigan to Texas. The other was a tall, shaggy college professor named Paul Howard Douglas, a Quaker from the state of Maine, who knew practically everything about the economy of the United States but, unlike Insull, owned only one pair of good pants.

The only link between Insull and Douglas was that both were experts, in theory at least, on a complex corporate structure known as the "holding company" system, which was an important factor in American business in 1929. The holding company system apparently began about 1890 in New Jersey, when the state fattened its treasury by passing a law that permitted companies incorporated there to buy and hold stock of other corporations. The idea quickly spread to other states.

In the 1920's, the holding company system was flourishing and there had grown up an intricate system of interlocking directorates that sometimes enabled corporation executives to do some remarkable juggling of funds behind the scenes. To take a simple but rather unusual example, the Continental Trading Company had been organized by Oilman Harry Sinclair, James O'Neil, president of the Prairie Gas and Oil Company (a Rockefeller concern) and Colonel Robert W. Stewart,

chairman of Standard Oil of Indiana (also a Rockefeller concern). The Continental Company made a deal with Colonel A. E. Humphrey of the Mexia Texas oil fields, to buy 33,333,-333 $\frac{1}{3}$ barrels of oil at \$1.50 a barrel. This oil was then resold to Standard Oil and to the Sinclair Consolidated Oil Company at \$1.75 a barrel, with the organizers of Continental set to realize a profit of about eight million dollars.

Samuel Insull had been twenty-one years old when he came from England to the United States and became secretary to Thomas A. Edison. He rose rapidly in the great utilities industry that grew out of Edison's discoveries and by 1904 Insull's Chicago Edison Company was unrivaled in the city. Soon afterward, he gained control of the Chicago transit system. He merged Commonwealth Edison with Chicago Edison. He created Middle West Utilities. He brought in the People's Gas and Coke Company. Other mergers extended his utilities control throughout the state and then expanded it into a Middle Western network of interlocking concerns. He even bought textile mills in New England. By 1929, he was sitting at the top of a corporate pyramid that included more than three hundred steam plants and some two hundred hydroelectric generating plants, which served almost two million customers. Several hundred thousand persons had invested money—often the savings of a lifetime—in his enterprises, confident that an Insull company was no less solid than bonds of the United States. His corporation's assets totaled two and a half billion dollars.

But in 1929, Insull was in trouble. There were hidden weaknesses in his complex empire. He had overexpanded. He was hard and often merciless in business deals and had many enemies. And now they had begun striking back at him by buying up large blocks of stock in his corporations, wresting control from his hands and forcing him to buy back at exorbitant prices. For many reasons he had to manipulate his finances and shift his funds from corporation to corporation to hold the line. His reserves were depleted, but he needed still more money. He drained it from Chicago banks. He turned thirty thousand em-

ployees into stock salesmen who urged Middle Westerners to pour more and more of their savings into Insull concerns. Many of them did, and Insull stayed atop his rotted empire.

About this time the Insull operations attracted the attention of thirty-seven-year-old Professor Douglas, a rugged extrovert who had won academic fame by writing scholarly books with titles such as *Real Wages in the United States, 1890-1926*. His idea of relaxation was to spend an evening curled up with a copy of the Federal Budget, which he could read and absorb at lightning speed. The Cook County Real Estate Board had become interested in the affairs of Samuel Insull and now the board asked Douglas to descend from the clouds and take a look at what was going on in the workaday world of utilities financing. Douglas accepted the invitation to investigate the Insull empire. It is doubtful that anybody could have been more blissfully ignorant of what he was getting into; that anybody could have known less about the ramifications of the Chicago political, gangster and financial alliance into which he was sticking his nose. When, as his study progressed, he began suggesting that there was something wrong with the Insull corporate structure, he was abused by almost everybody. Businessmen complained that he was a radical. Politicians tried to get him fired from the University. Gangsters muttered that the "professor" was talking too much about the political-racketeer alliance that held Chicago in its grip. Stockholders in Insull companies screamed that he was trying to rock the boat. State and city officials ignored his proposals for official action.

Yet Douglas' fight, futile as it seemed at the time, was a symbol of the beginning of the end of many financial shenanigans carried on in the name of Big Business. Soon the Insull empire would come tumbling down in a wild flutter of worthless stock certificates, wrecking banks, wiping out the savings of thousands of persons and bringing some remarkable changes in the lives of both Insull and Douglas.

The utilities magnate fled to Europe, was indicted and returned in 1932 for trial. But he had not lost his cunning. In the

hands of an astute press agent, the coldly arrogant financier was transformed into an old white-haired man who had spent his life and his fortune trying to benefit the Midwest, who was practically penniless, who rode the public busses instead of being driven in a limousine, who smiled sweetly at children and photographers and who, when it came to a showdown in the courtroom, easily won vindication by a jury of his peers.

Still more remarkable was the change in the professor. Having once rubbed elbows with public officeholders, racketeers and ward heelers, Douglas never went back to his ivory tower. He ran for a job on the City Council, was elected and loved it. When World War II came along he had enough political pull to be admitted to the United States Marine Corps as a private at the age of fifty. Severely wounded in battle in the South Pacific, he came home to recover and to be elected in 1948 to a seat in the United States Senate.

In 1929, Big Business was getting bigger in all parts of the United States. Industrial construction throughout the nation mounted more than 18 per cent over 1928 and was at a near-record total of almost a billion dollars for the year.

Furthermore, mass production was bringing prices down for not a few manufactured products. In the spread-eagled automobile field, for example, there were so many companies competing for sales that the buyer had a hard time making up his mind no matter how much or how little he was prepared to pay. In the lowest price field, a snappy little Whippet runabout cost \$595, a Ford cost \$625, a Plymouth \$655, a Chevrolet \$675 and a Durant \$695. Going up a step, the Dodge sold for \$845, the Pontiac \$745, the DeSoto \$845, the Olds \$925, the Erskine \$945, the Jordan \$1,395, the Reo \$1,395, the Buick \$1,320, the Moon \$1,345—and there were a dozen other six-cylinder automobiles in the same price range, some of them roadsters with an uncomfortable contrivance called a “rumble seat” stuck on behind. Of fifteen other models in a somewhat higher price category, the sporty Marmon could be bought for \$1,465, the

JOE ALEX MORRIS

Elcar for \$2,465, the Gardner for \$2,395 and the Franklin for \$2,980. But if the buyer could find nothing to his taste among these, he could wander on into a still loftier price range where he could choose from thirty-four different offerings. These included the Kissel at \$3,785, the racy Stutz at \$3,570, the Chrysler Imperial at \$2,875, the LaSalle at \$2,420, the Cadillac at \$3,295, the Lincoln at \$4,800, the Stearns-Knight at \$5,500, the Pierce Arrow at \$5,875 and that remarkable machine known as a Locomobile at \$12,500—to name a few.

In the first eight months of 1929, investors put up more than seventeen million dollars a day to finance the birth and growth of industry in the United States—or over six billion dollars a year. Security corporations, better known as “investment trusts,” absorbed the largest slice of this money—\$1,494,000,000—but public utilities came in for \$777,191,000, oil for \$220,599,000 and aviation plants for \$158,741,000.

An indication of the “bigness” of American corporations was provided by figures released in 1929 on earnings for the past year. General Motors reported earnings of \$276,468,000; American Telephone and Telegraph \$143,170,000; U. S. Steel \$113,999,000. And for the first half of 1929 almost all of these corporations were earning still more—U. S. Steel, for example, was more than five million ahead of its 1928 record. Kroger Grocery and Baking Company, which controlled the Piggly Wiggly Corporation, reported a net profit for the first six months of 1929 of \$4,015,000 as compared to \$2,538,000 in 1928; Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company was up from \$7,792,000 to \$13,131,000.

The nation's banks were merging and expanding, too, and the shares of Manhattan's First National Bank shot up twelve hundred points in two days to \$7,300 a share. Experts figured that the rise meant a gain of more than two million dollars to George F. Baker, chairman of the board, who was believed to hold some two thousand shares.

Some experts viewed the nation's “merger mania” with misgivings and others were critical of the trend toward branch

banking. When the American Bankers Association met in convention, the speech of John W. Pole, Comptroller of the Currency, was tensely awaited as an indication of the views of the administration and particularly of Secretary of Treasury Andrew Mellon. But Pole had nothing unfavorable to say about the trend, asserting that 20 per cent of all banking offices were branch banks and that the thing for Congress to take up was not whether but how far banking houses should be permitted to go in this direction. The merger mania was unchecked.

Two key figures in the business boom of 1929 were the Advertising Expert and the High Pressure Salesman. The whole concept of advertising had changed during the Twenties and by the end of the decade there seemed to be less emphasis on the quality of a product and much more emphasis on the contention that a product would make the buyer more popular or more efficient or more healthy or more wealthy.

"Overpaid at \$100 a week . . . yet he should be earning \$10,000," was the headline over an advertisement for the Alexander Hamilton Institute, which provided executive training for businessmen by correspondence. The North American Institute, which offered correspondence courses in public speaking, featured the heading: "They snickered when I got up to speak—but from the first word I held them spellbound." General Motors Corporation advertised "Body by Fisher" with paintings of exquisite and desirable women rather than paintings of the automobiles designed by Fisher. Full-page advertisements for Listerine introduced a new and repugnant word to the public by advising unpopular young men and women that their trouble might be halitosis or bad breath, and Life Buoy soap advised the same unhappy young men and women that they might be suffering from B.O., which was short for "body odor."

Advertising was currently designed to create the desire to own an electric refrigerator or to learn how to be the life of the party by playing popular songs on the piano, but salesmanship was essential to get the customer signed on the dotted line—

JOE ALEX MORRIS

even if he could pay only 10 per cent down and \$2.98 a week thereafter. Businessmen in 1929 were not forgetful of the fact that there had been a recession in business in 1921 when production was high but when manufactured goods had piled up as inventories to a disastrous point.

There were various reasons why new high levels in production did not cause fear of a repetition of the 1921 recession, but one important factor was the high development of the art of salesmanship which kept the goods moving out to customers. By 1929 the era of the high pressure salesman was in full flower. The door-to-door salesman was trained in the art of forcing his way through a half-opened door, of talking fast and furiously and of using ingenuity and subterfuge to make a sale. The sales manager was often looked upon as a slave driver who kept boosting each salesman's "quota" over the record of the previous quarter and making it clear that failure to reach the goal set would jeopardize a salesman's job. Often salesmen gave up part of their commissions or sold vacuum cleaners or electric toasters at a loss in some instances in order to make their "quotas."

As a result of pressure selling a large part of the output of manufactured goods was purchased on the installment plan. In 1929, the personal income of the nation—wages, salaries, rentals, dividends, etc.—was about eighty-five billion dollars and manufacturers' sales totaled almost six billion dollars. In the same year, installment credit rose just over three billion dollars. This represented a credit trend that would be intensified a quarter-century later. In 1954, personal income before taxes had increased approximately three and one-half times the 1929 total and manufacturers' sales had increased by four times. But installment credit had leaped up no less than seven times the 1929 total and almost equaled the total of manufacturers' sales.

During the Twenties there had been many mergers of corporations that—as *Fortune* magazine said later—had "water in

their veins and a gleam of monopoly in their eye." But even corporations overloaded with debt piled up during the 1921-22 recession seemed to be able to pay off fantastic obligations and still make a profit in the first half of 1929. "No slackening of the industrial pace need be anticipated," said Banker J. G. Royale. "Steady continuation of prosperity," echoed *Trade Winds*, the organ of the Union Trust Company in Cleveland. Business, added Lionel D. Edie of the Investment Research Corporation of Detroit, was being run better than ever before and the "new era" guaranteed stability, expansion and unbroken progress. Thanks to improved distribution and plentiful production, a "hand-to-mouth" buying of inventories was being practiced, Edie said, and the current low existing inventories (this was disputed in some quarters and by the end of the year inventories actually amounted to almost thirteen billion dollars) assured that production schedules were being "held in balance with a conception of rationalization of output."

But without regard for such gobbledygook of financial and business experts, it was true that numerous new business horizons were being opened up. Radium offered many possibilities—a new X-ray stethoscope, for example, to detect internal flaws in steel. A marvelous new metal called molybdenum and used to harden steel was coming into use as a result of the success of the Climax Molybdenum Company, which controlled 80 per cent of the world's production. Aluminum production jumped to a quarter-billion pounds in 1929 and new alloys, such as duraluminum, were making it possible to build more efficient machines. Big news in the automotive field was the "perfecting" of new pistons with light steel alloy used to replace the heavy iron previously used and with special struts controlling expansion and contraction of the metal. Synthetic dyes, a new shatterproof glass, quick-drying paints and a dozen new chemicals from the Du Pont laboratories were helping to transform everyday life in America. In New York, Harden F. Taylor, vice-president of Atlantic Coast Fishery, amazed guests by serving lamb chops that had been prepared by the butcher

a year earlier. They were succulent and juicy, having been frozen for twelve months. The meat served to dramatize Taylor's new method of freezing fish in forty minutes as compared to older methods that required from a couple of hours to a day and a half.

The confident spirit of business did not mean that there were no dark clouds in the sky during the summer of 1929. There were, in fact, a number of unhappy developments in the business and financial world. New England was one of the trouble spots because textiles were the blood stream of New England manufacturing, and textiles were moving out or losing ground. Take just one example. In 1927, the world's largest cotton maker was believed to be the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company on the Merrimac River in New Hampshire. It produced cottons, wools and rayons, boasted eight hundred thousand spindles and twenty-five thousand looms. But in 1929 Amoskeag's annual report showed a loss of almost a million dollars, described local taxes as "a great handicap in such difficult times" and said that the management could only promise to keep the mills running as long as possible.

The oil industry also had a headache. *The Lamp*, published by Standard Oil of New Jersey, reported that crude oil production in the first six months of 1929 was forty-five million barrels over the amount that could be marketed and that refiners had produced eight million barrels of gasoline more than could be sold in the same period. The result was a price war. By September the cost of a gallon of gasoline to the automobile owner was down to sixteen cents, plus tax.

These haphazard examples of clouds in the business sky were not in themselves, of course, indicative of weakness in the American economy as the summer of 1929 faded into autumn. What was really important was a sudden change in the temperature of Wall Street. The soaring stock market suddenly ceased to soar. Blue chip stocks began to sink. There was trouble in the air.

wall street

If 1929 was a pivotal year, a year of transition, then Wall Street was the pivot on which it swung from one extreme to another between January and November. The stock market was regarded as a kind of barometer measuring economic pressures and as it climbed to record heights—heights that would not be touched again for twenty-five years—optimism mounted. Calvin Coolidge in his last message to Congress had declared that there was never “a more pleasing prospect than that which appears at the present time” and President Hoover had told Americans that there was no good reason why there should not be two chickens in every pot and two cars in every garage. Secretary of Treasury Andrew Mellon asserted as the year started that business was going forward on an even keel and that all was well.

The rise of the stock market, if not the rise of a “get-rich-quick” fervor among Americans, had begun in 1924 and continued steadily for three years, except for a slight break in 1926. Gains were made slowly but solidly. For example, the prices of twenty-five leading industrial stocks in 1924 were at an average of 106, as reported by the *New York Times*. By the end of 1927, the average was up to 245. This seemed reasonable to most investors because of increasing corporation earnings and the prospect of still greater earnings in the future. It was not until 1928, that things really began to get out of hand.

In the past, the stock market had been largely the domain of men supposedly well trained in the intricacies of finance and investment, but 1928 saw hundreds of thousands of amateurs—shoe clerks, taxicab drivers, housewives and chorus girls—rushing to buy a few stocks on margin and hoping that they could double or triple their savings on a rising market. The Ex-

JOE ALEX MORRIS

change ceased to be a market place where quotations supposedly represented the business situation in the nation. For tens of thousands of speculators, it became a device for gambling, for betting on whether prices would go up or down in a comparatively short period. No race track plunger ignored the form charts as recklessly or listened to the tipsters as credulously as did the little speculators. By the beginning of 1929, the *New York Times* industrial average had gone up 86 points to 331 and some experts were beginning to worry—usually in private—about where it would all end. The *Times* financial writer pointed out some strong factors behind the bull market, but added that there were also “distinctly disquieting” developments such as the rash abuse of credit, the abnormal money stringency (call money was at 12 per cent),¹ a “fantastic illusion” regarding the economic future of the nation and a public appetite for “the most reckless stock speculation.”

Such warnings, however, were usually lost in a wave of optimistic statements in the newspapers. The speculators kept right on speculating and the big transatlantic liners such as *Leviathan* established stock quotations boards and brokerage offices on shipboard so that travelers could continue to trade by radio while en route to Europe.

The stock market, everybody kept saying in 1929, was not a gamble; it was an investment in the future of America as well as a wonderful way to make money without working.

There were some five hundred investment trusts or investment companies in existence at the time. A trust might hold securities in many different companies and thus spread the risk taken by each investor over a wide range, depending on the judgment of its management. Some investment trusts were fly-by-night ventures such as one in Boston that sold twenty-

¹ Call money usually was borrowed for very short periods—a week or a month—to finance stock deals, and the high rate did not represent a heavy drain on the speculator. For example, if a speculator borrowed at twelve per cent to buy a stock that stood at one hundred and the stock rose one point during the month his gain would be enough to pay the interest on his loan. Long-term borrowers, on the other hand, were paying only about six per cent.

WHAT A YEAR!

five million dollars' worth of securities to the public and then went into bankruptcy. Some were as respectable as the House of Morgan and, in fact, J. P. Morgan and Company in 1929 sponsored an investment trust whose stock rose from seventy-five to ninety-nine dollars in four days.

The most remarkable trust may have been the Goldman, Sachs Trading Corporation, launched at the end of 1928 by one of New York's most respected investment banking and brokerage partnerships. The Trading Corporation issued one hundred million dollars' worth of stock at a hundred dollars a share, all of which was bought by the parent concern of Goldman, Sachs and Company, which then sold 90 per cent of it to the public at \$104. Within a month the stock was up to \$222.50 or about twice the assets of the Trading Corporation. In the next six months the Trading Corporation was busy merging with other investment trusts and launching new and larger trusts of its own, with a kind of incredible confidence that the public would continue to buy, which it did. In one month, the concern sold more than a quarter-billion dollars' worth of securities to Americans who wanted to become "partners" in Big Business.

Wall Street in 1929 was feuding with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Some financial experts believed that the Federal Reserve Board should exert its influence against unbridled speculation by raising its rediscount rate from 5 to 6 per cent and thus reducing the money available for loans to speculators. Wall Street speculators believed the Board should keep its hands off.

The way it worked was this: A speculator buying on margin had to have, in effect, a loan of money to cover the amount of his investment that he could not put up in cash. Banks lent money to brokers and brokers to customers, with the securities purchased as collateral. Such loans are known as broker's loans or call loans and by 1929 they had increased from about one billion dollars in the early 1920's to almost six billion. And the rate of interest on such loans had gone up from a normal 5 per

JOE ALEX MORRIS

cent to 12 per cent, a handsome profit to the lenders that attracted money from all over the world to New York. The Federal Reserve System entered into this situation because it lent money to New York banks at 5 per cent interest and the banks could relend the money in the call market at 12 per cent. In view of the high rate in the call market there might legitimately be some question as to whether a moderate increase in the Federal Reserve rate would have any noticeable effect on speculation, but it was a psychological factor that alarmed Wall Street because even at 12 per cent there was a shortage of credit available for the market.

In February there were ominous rumors from Washington, where the Federal Reserve Board had been meeting regularly, that the rate might be raised. It wasn't, but the Board issued a couple of vague warnings that it had "a grave responsibility whenever there is evidence that member banks are maintaining speculative security loans with the aid of Federal Reserve credit." This meant virtually nothing, but it was enough to cause a sharp decline in the market in February and—as the Board continued to meet without making any announcements—a heavy break late in March. The March break, which wiped out many small investors and temporarily sent the rate for call money up to 20 per cent, seemed to demonstrate that a firm stand by the administration might halt the orgy of speculation. But it also demonstrated something else: the possibility of panic. Washington remained hesitant and silent.

Americans tend to think back on the Great Bull Market of 1929 as a wild and steady wave of buying orders building up on the shores of Wall Street until it topped the spires of lower Manhattan—and which then collapsed in an instant on Black Thursday, October 24, to inaugurate the Great Depression. Actually, it was neither that swift nor that simple. The house of cards began to give way in September, the day of greatest disaster was October 29 and it was not until November that the market ended—temporarily, at least—its historic nose dive.

WHAT A YEAR!

There had been a definite if moderate downturn in the national economy in September, with factory production slightly off and steel output declining. Home building was depressed and foreign trade had decreased over a period of several months.

None of these or other adverse developments at the time was regarded as particularly grave, although some economists would later cite them as warning signals. The fact remains that in September—perhaps merely because tens of thousands of investors began to wonder whether it was time to get out—the stock market lost ground, regained the ground it had lost and then lost a bit more as October rolled around. The second and third weeks of October witnessed a severe decline in prices and, for the first time in six months, the ticker fell behind on selling orders on Monday, October 21.

On Tuesday, Charles E. Mitchell, head of the National City Bank, who had been on a trip to Europe, returned to New York and took a bold position by telling reporters that the market was fundamentally sound and would correct itself. The next day the market dropped so rapidly that the *New York Times* industrial average lost 29 points and stood at 384, back where it had been in June.

The next morning—Thursday—the market opened unspectacularly but trading soon became very heavy and prices began sliding. The ticker could not keep up with transactions but, as each new quotation was belatedly printed on the tape, it was evident that the trend was downward. Traders could only guess how far downward because of the delay on the ticker, but some stocks were losing ten points between reported sales. Gradually, as the confusion increased, a kind of hysteria seemed to grip Wall Street and broker's offices all over the country. United States Steel sank from 205 to 190. Montgomery Ward, which had touched a 1929 high of 156, opened at 83 and dropped to 50. Everywhere across the nation the wires carried the message: sell, sell, sell! Little speculators who had saved and borrowed and borrowed again to get in on the free ride to

JOE ALEX MORRIS

riches were sold out when they could not raise still more cash to cover their margins.

By eleven o'clock hysteria had turned to panic. In brokerage offices everywhere men and women stared at the quotation boards or the ticker tape screens with horror and fascination. A crowd gathered in the street outside the New York Exchange and stood in silence, waiting for nobody knew what unless it was a sign from the heavens.

The story of Black Thursday, however, was not ended. Late in the morning a secret emergency meeting had convened in the offices of J. P. Morgan and Company at 23 Wall Street. The head of the House of Morgan was in Europe but partner Thomas W. Lamont met with Charles E. Mitchell, chairman of the board of the National City Bank; Albert H. Wiggin, chairman of the Chase National Bank; William C. Potter, president of the Guaranty Trust Company; and Seward Prosser, chairman of the Bankers Trust Company. The purpose of the meeting was to get some "organized support" behind the market—the traditional role of Big Banking stepping in to stop a panic.

These men controlled resources estimated at six billion dollars and could influence still greater resources. They were regarded as pillars of the financial community. If any men could save the market, they were the ones to do it and when word of their meeting spread there was a stir of hope along Wall Street. The five bankers, later joined by George F. Baker, Jr., of the First National Bank, decided to form a pool that, without trying to set any firm price level, would seek to steady outstanding securities in a manner that would restore trading on the Exchange to an orderly basis. The thing that they were counting on was a bold move that would be of sufficient psychological force to end the atmosphere of panic.

Obviously, this required publicity and by the time the meeting broke up reporters had been tipped off and were waiting at Lamont's door. He set the tone for the rescue attempt by quietly pointing out to the newspapermen, who had been frantically covering the greatest disaster of their careers, that there

had been "a little distress selling on the Stock Exchange." But, he added, it had been found that "there are no houses in difficulty and reports from brokers indicate that margins are being maintained satisfactorily." In brief, his remarks conveyed the idea that there was nothing fundamentally wrong and that the bankers were ready to help steady the market.

The main act of the rescue drama then shifted to the Stock Exchange floor. At about half-past one o'clock, Richard F. Whitney, vice-president of the Exchange and well known as a floor trader for the House of Morgan, shouldered his way through the milling crowd of traders until he stood at Post No. 2, where steel shares were traded. In a confident voice, he proposed to buy ten thousand shares of United States Steel at 205, well above the last previous bid. He got only two hundred shares but jauntily left his order for the rest and proceeded on across the floor as the tickers flashed the news of his bid. Within a few minutes, Whitney placed almost a score of similar orders for the purchase of other leading securities representing an investment of probably twenty million dollars.

The effect was electric. Nobody could longer doubt that the bankers had moved in to get things back under control. By the time Whitney left the floor, hysteria was subsiding. Prices began to recover. Steel went up to 206, an over-all gain of almost 2 points for the day. Montgomery Ward climbed from a low of 50 back to 74 and the *New York Times* industrial average for the day showed a decline of only 12 points, representing a tremendous comeback from the midday lows.

On Friday after Black Thursday and during the short Saturday morning session, the stock market was reasonably steady. All over the nation, business leaders competed in issuing statements designed to soothe frayed nerves and President Hoover chipped in with a declaration that "the fundamental business of the country . . . is on a sound and prosperous basis."

Yet, on Monday, things were worse instead of better. Selling orders had accumulated over the week end as people all over

the country decided that the time had come to get out of the market regardless of what the most powerful bankers in the country might do. The price trend was rapidly downward. U. S. Steel dropped to 186 and there was no Whitney to bid it up again. A.T. & T. lost 24 points; General Electric lost 47. The decline was too much for the bankers' rescue pool and, at another meeting, they decided that the best they could do was try to make the downward trend an orderly one.

Tuesday, October 29, was the climax, repeating and intensifying all that had gone before. Sales—often in large blocks of stock—were tremendous from the opening. Prices dropped spasmodically and the bankers' pool fell apart at the seams.

By closing hour, the demoralization of prices seemed to be complete. Steel was down to 167 at one time, but closed at 174. Westinghouse which had once touched 286 was selling at 100. The big investment trusts were dropping just as rapidly. Blue Ridge Investment Trust, an offspring of Goldman, Sachs Trading Corporation, had been at 24 in September but was down to 3 by the close of trading on October 29. Other investment trusts were in still greater trouble and there were no bids at all for their stock. Volume of trading was unprecedented and, when the ticker finally caught up hours after closing time, no less than 16,410,000 shares had changed hands. It was a record that had not been broken or even approached a quarter-century later. When the debris was finally cleared away, the *Times* industrial averages were down 43 points. In effect, all of the gains of 1929 were wiped out in what Professor John Kenneth Galbraith would later describe in his book "The Great Crash," as "the most devastating day in the history of the New York stock market, and it may have been the most devastating day in the history of markets."

The theatrical publication *Variety* summed up what had happened even more succinctly in its celebrated headline:

WALL ST. LAYS AN EGG

end of a decade

The Roaring Twenties didn't end with a bang, but neither did they end with a whimper. In retrospect, it might seem that when bleak December brought a close to that fabulous decade the American people would have been justified in feeling that the end of their world had arrived. But it was not that way at all.

America was not only a powerful industrial nation; it was a young industrial nation. The factories were still there. The coal and iron were still there; the food and the people were still there. What had happened was that big and foolish America had been on a year-long binge; a real, hell-raising binge like Saturday night at the county fair. Naturally, in the cold gray dawn of December, America woke up with a supercolossal hangover that was all wool and a yard wide. It was painful and it made a guy feel foolish. There wasn't any use reaching for your pocketbook because you knew it was gone. But this was another day. It was time to mutter "Never again!" and to get back on the job.

After the first shock had worn off, most Americans were able to enjoy the many jokes and wisecracks that grew out of the market collapse and the confusion attending it. Eddie Cantor, who had been planning to live on his investments, wrote a book called *Caught Short! A Saga of Wailing Wall Street* that had everybody in stitches. He described himself as a comedian, author, statistician and victim, and dated his tome 1929 A.C., meaning "After the Crash." Almost everybody got a good laugh out of the story of one speculator whose margin account was exhausted and who was sold out twice in one day by his rattled broker.

An ability to laugh, however, did not mean that all was light-

ness and fun. Many thousands of men and women who had happily retired to live—some meagerly, some in great comfort—on their investments now discovered that they had to go back to work. Some of them never were able to find jobs. Some of them made new fortunes. In Indiana, a prominent manufacturer who had retired in order to complete his interrupted college education saw his investments so depleted by the Wall Street collapse that he had to return to business. Two years later he had restored his finances, again returned to school and later became a college president, which had been his goal for years.

Few were so lucky. News dispatches from all over the country told of suicides which were—often inaccurately—blamed on the crash. The fact that newspaper reporters naturally checked into all suicides to determine whether they could be linked in any way to the market tended at times to give the impression that Wall Street was a dangerous place to walk because of falling bodies. This false impression was exploded later by statistics showing that there were only forty-four suicides in all Manhattan between mid-October and mid-November as compared to fifty-three in the same period of 1928. The same was generally true for the United States as a whole.

The year 1929 was “the year of Mighty Change” in the opinion of Joseph V. Stalin, the Communist dictator of Soviet Russia. Stalin had been ill for some weeks but censorship concealed all details of his illness. There were frequent rumors that he was dying and at public ceremonies the people occasionally cried out for government officials to say whether the Man of Steel was sick or well. They got no replies, but at last Stalin himself appeared unexpectedly at a celebration in Moscow and was greeted by thunderous cheers. He was thin but his smile was benign. The dictator could well afford to smile. In 1929, he had succeeded in expelling from Russia his ancient enemy, Leon Trotsky. And then had come the gratifying news that the capitalistic nations had been shaken to the core by the Wall Street crash. Hailing “the year of Mighty Change,” Stalin de-

WHAT A YEAR!

clared that "we are attacking capitalism all along the line and defeating it. Without foreign capital we are accomplishing the unprecedented feat of building up heavy industry in a backward country. . . . When we have industrialized the Soviet Union and set the peasants to driving tractors . . . we shall see which country can be called backward and which the vanguard of human progress."

As viewed from the towers of the Kremlin there seemed, indeed, to be a mighty change in the face of America in December of 1929. Yet the change was not easy to see if you were walking on Main Street in Sauk Center, Minnesota, on Bourbon Street in New Orleans, on Grant Street in Pittsburgh or on Fifth Avenue in New York. At the newly opened Fifth Avenue jewelry store of Black, Starr and Frost-Gorham, Inc., where the interior was sixteenth-century Italian Gothic, an exquisitely matched pearl necklace was confidently offered to Christmas shoppers for seven hundred thousand dollars.

Christmas shopping in general was at a brisk pace and in volume exceeded the sales records of 1928, although it was noted that the greatest increases in buying were in chain stores featuring low-priced goods.

One of the most remarkable results of the big crash, however, may have been the fact that John Davison Rockefeller, Jr., was left "holding the bag" in a huge New York real estate deal. Rockefeller, a violinist of some skill in his youth, and a number of other wealthy men had been interested for some time in efforts to build a new home for the Metropolitan Opera Company. They agreed that a real estate development with the opera house as its center would not only enhance the beauty of Fifth Avenue in the lower Fifties, but that the development could make the opera company self-supporting in the future. As the first step in this agreement, Rockefeller leased a run-down area bounded by Fifth Avenue, Forty-eighth Street, Sixth Avenue (later the Avenue of the Americas) and Fifty-first Street, paying a rental of over three million dollars a year under a lease which, with options, runs until 2015.

The lease was no sooner signed, however, than the Wall

JOE ALEX MORRIS

Street collapse frightened the sponsors of the development plan and they hastily took cover, leaving Rockefeller clutching a bag that contained some of the most expensive rock and 229 of the most dilapidated old brownstone houses—many of them harboring speakeasies—in New York City. Rockefeller made no attempt to get out from under a deal that would lose approximately four million dollars a year, including taxes of one million. But there was only one alternative open to him and that was to defy the Wall Street disaster by constructing a commercial office building development on the site. Ten years and \$125 million later, Rockefeller Center's fourteen towering office buildings were a vast commercial center, one of the nation's most spectacular attractions for sight-seers and an impressive monument to the builder's faith in the future.

Anybody who looks back to 1929, the eleventh year after the First World War, cannot easily avoid the temptation to compare what happened then to the state of the nation in 1956, the eleventh year after the Second World War.

Economically, the United States was moving toward new peaks in 1929 after a fairly steady rise since 1918. Almost the same thing occurred between 1945 and the beginning of 1956: production of industrial goods went up 30 per cent; employment rose by over 20 per cent; over-all consumer credit more than tripled and reached an unprecedented peak of more than thirty-four billion dollars; personal income in the nation increased 75 per cent to more than three hundred billion dollars. Furthermore, the Stock Exchange was booming in 1955, and the number of investors had increased to around eight million or five times as many as in 1929. The earnings of many corporations broke all past records and General Motors profits rose above one billion dollars.

At the same time, home building showed signs of tapering off in 1955 as it had done in 1928 and 1929 following a post-war boom. And the position of the farm population was strikingly reminiscent of 1929 as net farm income per capita de-

creased from more than seven hundred dollars in 1948 to approximately six hundred dollars in 1955. There were signs of discontent with the Republican administration in some agricultural areas—also reminiscent of 1929—and the Democrats were making efforts to capitalize on the situation.

The similarities did not end there. As in 1929, the great problem in international affairs was disarmament and again the experts were saying—perhaps more accurately this time—that another world war would mean the end of our civilization and possibly the utter destruction of the great population centers around the globe. At the end of the first decade of the Atomic Age in 1955, an article in *Harper's Magazine* asserted that "we can be quite certain that a major unrestricted war would begin with a disaster for us, as well as for [the Russians], of absolutely unprecedented and therefore unimaginable proportions. . . . A future war resulting in mutual annihilation is far from being impossible." Along the same line, Dr. Albert Einstein had remarked: "I don't know what weapons will be used in World War III but I can predict what weapons will be used in World War IV—stones."

And in 1956, the two powers that had emerged in the decade after the First World War were dominant in international councils. Soviet Russia again had survived a great war and a series of internal conflicts within the ruling Communist party, and had achieved a position of greater influence than ever before in world affairs. The United States again had thrown its weight into the balance to sway the outcome of a world war and had emerged far more powerful and far more willing to accept the burden of international leadership. And, incidentally, Admiral Byrd was again heading an expedition to the Antarctic.

These parallels and many others—traffic jams, for example!—could be regarded with interest as 1956 rolled around without necessarily offering any clues to the future. The differences between 1929 and 1956 were important, too—possibly more important than the similarities. In the last quarter of a century,

JOE ALEX MORRIS

the government's power to deal with economic perils had been vastly strengthened and government in general had become more alert to the necessity for drastic action in an emergency. In October of 1955, just after the stock market had suffered the sharpest one-day decline since 1929, the chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, Arthur F. Burns, said that the nation's business was "poised on a high plateau with neither the threat of inflation nor of recession . . . ever very distant. We must be alert. . . . The only rigidity that we can afford is the principle that the best way to fight a recession is to prevent it."

By 1956, the machinery for maintaining economic stability had been greatly strengthened. The powers of the Federal Reserve Board had been increased. Purchase of stocks on margin could be prohibited and the Securities and Exchange Commission could enforce important controls on market manipulation and on conditions that encourage speculation. Furthermore, the distribution of national income was more equitable than in 1929, the working man's living standard had been raised by a substantial margin and the social security system had become an accepted part of the economic fabric, as had some form of government support for farm prices.

Nobody could know how well or how poorly these changes would serve to protect the nation's economic balance until the next great emergency arose, whatever or whenever that might be. It had not been easy in 1929 to foresee what lay ahead, to guess whether the country would move into an era of unparalleled prosperity or into the most desperate depression in its history—not any easier than it would be in 1956 to forecast the future. But it would always be true that a great many Americans were willing to try.



